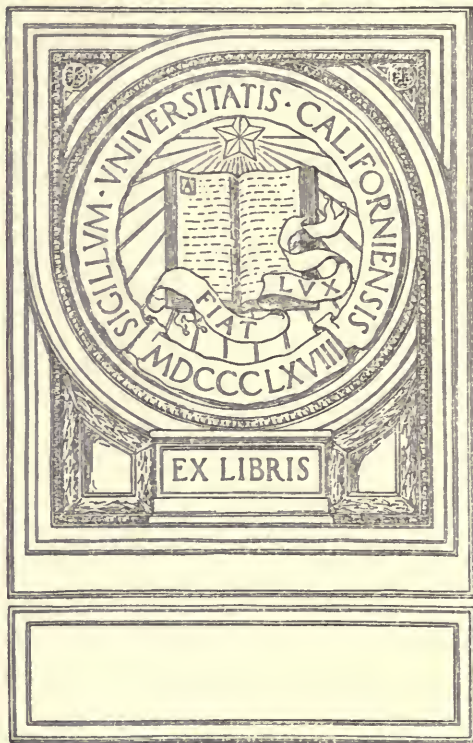




JACK HARKAWAY'S
ESCAPE FROM THE BRIGANDS

BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



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JACK HARKAWAY'S ESCAPE FROM THE BRIGANDS

BEING THE CONCLUSION OF
"JACK HARKAWAY AMONG THE BRIGANDS"

BY
BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG



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JACK HARKAWAY'S ESCAPE FROM THE BRIGANDS.

TWO MUCH-MARRIED MEN.

HAD a bomb-shell fallen in the midst of the three friends, it could not have created greater consternation than this announcement.

"Jack taken!" cried Harvey, dismally.

"Harkaway nobbled!" said the little coxswain, blankly.

"Our leader in limbo!" cried Carden, angrily. "I'll not believe it. Where did you get the news, Mr. Mole?"

"In Monday's room. I—I go there occasionally to have a chat with the black, as I am so well acquainted with his country and all that."

He forgot to say Monday supplied him with liquor *ad lib.*, as well as filling his cask for him whenever he went out to take a siesta in the shady part of the garden.

"Jack taken!" said Harvey again. "Well, I'm flabbergasted!"

"It's knocked me into a three-cornered hat," cried Walter.

"Who told Monday?" asked Tom Carden.

The practical mind of the ex-captain of the Oxford eight would not be satisfied until it had got to the bottom of this alarming rumor.

"I'll tell you all I know willingly," answered Mr. Mole.

The three young men bent forward in their anxiety to hear what he had to say.

They had not expected this cruel stroke of fortune. Nor could they yet bring themselves to believe it.

Jack Harkaway taken prisoner by the brigands!

Jack in the power of Barboni!

It seemed impossible.

So quiet was everyone when Mr. Mole began to speak, that you might have heard a pin drop.

"There is a little man down stairs," said Mr. Mole, "who, I am informed by Monday, practised in England the sartorial art."

"Talk plain English," replied Carden, impetuously.

"My dear Carden, why this impulsiveness?" said Mr. Mole, blandly.

"Because I hate rot of that sort."

"Sartor in Latin, is tailor: therefore, sartorial means relating to the trade of a tailor. Have you so soon forgotten your Latin?—but it is just like you boating men."

"He means Bigamini," replied Harvey.

"Yes, that is his benighted name. The creature calls himself Bigamini, though why he should apply such a strange appellation to himself is more than your humble servant, Isaac Mole, can discover."

"Why do some people call themselves Moles?" said the little coxswain.

"Sir," replied Mr. Mole, turning sharply round.

"Go on with your story, quick."

"I beg your pardon; you did me the honour to address an observation to me."

"Did I?"

"Undoubtedly, and it was not of a very flattering nature, I will thank you to explain it."

"I didn't mean any thing," said the little coxswain, with a subdued groan.

"Men should never say what they don't mean; and remember, if you please, Mr. Campbell, when you next address me, that you are speaking to a university man, a scholar, and I trust a gentleman."

"Really I——"

"Shut up, Walter," said Harvey. "What's the use of riling Mole?"

"Be quiet, young one," replied Carden. "This is not the proper time for wrangling."

"Well said, indeed, Carden," remarked Mr. Mole. "I think that Mr. Campbell, if he wants to insult me, might choose a fitter time than that in which we are discussing the probable captivity of our mutual friend, Harkaway."

"I didn't insult you," said the little coxswain.

"Pardon, me, you did."

"How?"

"You asked me——"

"Look here," interrupted Carden, "are we coming to the point or not? What is this about Harkaway?"

"Bigamini says that he has been captured by Barboni," answered Mr. Mole.

"That's what I want to get at. Harvey, will you kindly send for Bigamini, if he is down stairs with Monday?" exclaimed Carden.

Harvey rang the bell, and the little tailor was sent for.

He came into the room, bowing profoundly, first to the ladies and then to the gentlemen.

At intervals of short duration, he put a handkerchief to his eyes as if he wished to mop away a tear.

Altogether Bigamini seemed most profoundly affected.

"Gentlemen, your most obedient," he exclaimed.

"What is this you have been saying about Mr. Harkaway?" inquired Tom Carden, who took upon himself at once the office of spokesman.

Bigamini did the mop business with more energy than ever.

First he wiped one eye with a dab, and then he wiped the other with two dabs.

This was intended to be expressive of great grief.

Then he blew his nose violently.

"Very sorry, sir," he exclaimed, "but I'm the messenger of bad tidings."

"What tidings?"

"I happened to look in at the Café di Europa, and the one topic of conversation was the capture of Mr. Harkaway by the brigands."

"Is that all you know?" eagerly inquired Carden.

"Yes, sir."

"They say that Mr. Harkaway is captured by Barboni," said Carden.

"Yes, sir," replied Bigamini, again.

"I told you it was the common talk of Naples," put in Mole.

"Oh, oh! — Boo — oo — o!" sobbed Bigamini. "If I might be allowed the blessed privilege to lay down my life for my generous benefactor—oo—ooo!"

His handkerchief was again in requisition, and he nearly bungled his eyes up by dabbing at them.

"Have you had any certain intelligence about the alleged capture?" asked Carden.

"No, sir; only hearsay. Boo—oo—oo."

"Stop that blubbing. Is that all you can tell us?"

"You know as much as I do, sir. Oh, if I could only die for——"

"Go down stairs."

"You don't believe me, sir, because I'm a miserable Bigamini; but if what I hear is true, I'm not the only one in this room who has married two wives."

The little tailor darted a significant look at Mole.

"Go down stairs, I tell you," exclaimed Carden, "and ask Monday to give you some refreshment."

"Thank you kindly, sir. My wives were white, and——"

"Be off."

Bigamini again wiped his eyes, bowed profoundly to them, and then quitted the room.

"Shut that door after you," exclaimed the little coxswain.

"I will do that," said Mr. Mole; "this man spoke about wives. Do you think he meant to insult me?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," replied Walter; "all I can think of now is Harkaway's position."

"Do you insult me again? If I thought——"

"Leave us, please, Mr. Mole, to talk the matter over," said Harvey.

"Certainly, but——"

"If you can't help us, don't upset us," said the coxswain.

"My dear, good sir, do please go away; this is no time for foolishness," said Tom Carden. "If Harkaway is really captured, we must be off to-night to try and rescue him."

Carden, Harvey, and the little coxswain immediately retired into a corner of the room, and became absorbed in an animated conversation.

Mr. Mole descended the stairs, threaded the passage, and entered Monday's pantry with the professed object of seeing if he could "pump" Bigamini.

Bigamini was seated in a chair, holding in his hand a glass of wine.

He looked up impudently as Mr. Mole made his appearance.

"Monday," said Mr. Mole, "who is this man?"

"Um little harmless fellow they call Bigamini, sare," replied Monday.

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Him got um two wives, sare."

"Indeed? He ought to be punished. He is not the sort of person to be encouraged in this house, Monday.

"You shut up," said Bigamini. "My wives are white, and you've got two black ones, you old Mormonite."

Mr. Mole turned pale with rage.

"Monday!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sare."

"You heard what he called me. Me, Isaac Mole, a Bachelor of Arts, and a Doctor of Laws! He called me a Mormonite!"

"So you are," shouted Bigamini.

"Turn him out, Monday," said Mr. Mole.

"Him too strong, sare."

"He called me a very opprobrious name."

"So you are," replied Bigamini.

"I command you, Monday, to eject that objectionable individual," said Mr. Mole.

"If you start, sare, Monday give um help," answered the black, with a grin.

"I!" said Mr. Mole, with a look of supreme disdain. "I wouldn't soil my fingers with such carrion."

"Sir," said Bigamini, "I feel that right-minded people have a right to despise me."

"I do despise you," answered Mole.

"You have no right to do so."

"Why?"

"I am a miserable Bigamini. Once I was a happy Smifins. You, too, are a miserable Bigamini, because you, like myself, have married two wives."

"Fellow!" said Mole, indignantly.

"Fellow yourself," replied Bigamini. "I'm not going to knuckle down to you."

"Beware!" cried Mole, threateningly.

"I'm as good as you are."

"My wives are dead. They were drowned at sea, I am thankful to say."

"That don't do away with the bigamy. You've done it."

"Do you dare to place your contemptible self on a level with me?"

"We are both victims of an unfortunate passion. 'Oh, love, scrumptious love!' I say."

"What?"

"Isn't it funny when you feel that way? Oh, crumbs! When I first saw my second! Yum! yum!" returned Bigamini.

He got up and danced about wildly, as if the recollection was too much for him.

"I say," he said again, stopping before Mr. Mole.

"Ruffian! do you presume to speak to your betters?" said Mr. Mole.

"Betters! I can't see them. Where are they?"

"Silence!"

"Monday, my sable friend," said Bigamini, "be quiet, and stop that grinning. Silence in the pig market, and let that old boar speak first."

"This is too much!" cried Mole, beside himself with rage.

"Go it, old beans! You're kind and I'm grateful."

"Vulgar and contemptible bigamist, mind your eye!" shouted Mole.

The next moment Bigamini had rolled under the table, and saw stars.

In a moment he was up again and rubbing his eye.

"What did you do that for?" he asked, ruefully.

"To check your impertinence. Let it be a lesson to you."

"You've damaged my peepers."

"I meant to, sir."

"Do you think I'm going to stand this?" exclaimed Bigamini. "Look out, sir. I'm coming. Who's afraid?"

The next minute they were at it, hammer and tongs.

"Go it, one! go it, t'other! Hit um up, sare," cried Monday, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Bigamini was more active than Mr. Mole, but the latter was taller, and he warded off his antagonist's blows pretty well.

Suddenly Bigamini sat down and began to rub his stomach.

"Ah, how um like that?" asked Monday.

"That was a body blow, I flatter myself," said Mole, regarding the little tailor complacently.

"What did you hit below the line for?" asked Bigamini.

"What line?"

"The stomach line. You hit below the belt, governor. It ain't fair. You're a coward, that's what you is."

"That took his wind, eh, Monday?" said Mole.

"You hyked me in the grummet," continued Bigamini, "and I'll slate you for it presently. You don't think I'm going to stand hyking in the grummet by the likes of you."

"Come on, my worthy friend; I hope you like it," replied Mole.

Bigamini rose, with a gasp of pain, and clenching his fists, ran again at his opponent.

"Spile um beauty, sare. Paint um ugly face," replied Monday.

"Such is my pious intention," answered Mole.

Another round took place, the result of which was that Bigamini got well on to the nose, and Mr. Mole measured his length on the floor.

"That's one on the conk. All fair and square. First blood to me," remarked Bigamini.

"Monday, give me wine and wipe my nose. It bleeds overmuch," said Mole, in piteous accents.

Monday lifted him up, and gave him a duster to apply to his injured nose, and handed him a tumbler of iced wine.

"Persuade that contemptible little humbug to go away," said Mole.

"I shan't," answered Bigamini.

"It will be best for him. I shall hurt him if he don't go."

"Now then," said Monday, "you can vamoose."

"Not I," replied Bigamini, boldly.

"Clear out this caboose!" cried Monday.

"My valiant representative of a persecuted and fallen race," said Bigamini, "I——"

"What um call me?"

"Valiant offspring of a line of kings."

"Um like that better," said Monday.

"Will you allow the ninth part of a man to mock you, Monday?" said Mr. Mole.

"Think um chaffing, sare?"

"I am sure of it. Turn him out."

"Now then, clear um track," said Monday, threateningly.

"I go; use no further violence," replied Bigamini. "Mr. Mole, I wish you good-night."

"Good-night," replied Mole, mopping his nose.

"In the language of the ancients, I say, adoo."

"Be off!"

"I slope, but ere I go I could wish to drink a glass with

you, just to show there is no animosity. We're both Bigaminis. And I say——"

"What?"

"Isn't it funny w'en you fee' that way?"

Bigamini began to whistle a popular air, and gaily danced out of the room.

Stopping at the door, he put his finger on his nose and said—

"When we marry our third, won't it be?—you know. Yum! yum!"

With which enigmatical sentence, he again pirouetted out into the passage, and so into the street.

Scarcely had he quitted the door of the house than he stopped short.

It seemed as if he was transfixed with horror and dismay.

He was rooted to the spot.

His arms hung listlessly by his side, his lower jaw dropped, and his short, stubbly hair had a decided tendency to stand on end.

His knees knocked together, as if he had been living in the marshes of the Campagna, and had caught the ague.

In front of him was a woman.

She was not a Neapolitan.

Her dress was a cotton print, her shawl was redolent of the New Cut, and she carried a baggy-looking umbrella, which looked as if it was usually suspended over an apple-stall.

It was this woman who had frightened Bigamini.

If she weighed a stone, she was at least sixteen, and her fat puffy cheeks glowed with walking in the air, which, though it was evening, was close and stifling.

The women grounded her umbrella as a soldier does his rifle, and took a long, steady look at Bigamini.

Then she made a rush at him.

"Yah!" she exclaimed. "I've got him."

The next instant she held him tightly by the arm.

Then she let him go, and began to box his ears soundly.

"You wretch!" she said, "I swore I'd follow you to the hend of the hearth, and I've found you at last, amongst the garlic-eating furrineers, and the hussies as I've often 'eard on, but never seen before."

Bigamini uttered a howl, and ran as quickly as he could into the house again.

Mr. Mole had stopped the bleeding of his nose, and was

standing in front of the cupboard where Monday kept his bottles.

"My friend," he said, "we'll liquor up. Let us indulge after that bout of arms, in which I think I may claim to be victorious."

"What um row in um street, sare?" asked Monday.

"I know not. Ah! here is that thief of a Bigamini come back Monday, protect me! I call upon you."

Bigamini, however, had not much fight left in him. If he had seen a ghost, he could not have looked more scared.

"Jehosophat!" he exclaimed. "Ain't this a go?"

"What?" asked Monday, who had taken a pipe.

"Have you got a hole a poor devil can creep into?"

"What for?"

"I've seen my wife!"

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Mole. "I can pity him. Which one is it—the first or the second?"

"The first, worse luck. Second's all right."

"Hide him, Monday, hide him! We are not bereft of Christian kindness, I hope," said Mole, feelingly.

"Here," said Monday, "come under this table. Quick with um."

Bigamini would gladly have done as he was told.

But he was too late.

His wife had followed closely on his track.

Mrs. Smiffins was at his heels.

She burst into the room, and saying, "Here, you ass, wretch, beast, brute!" began to belabour him with her bloated-looking gingham.

"Oh, you bad man!" she said. "Oh, you cruel wretch! Oh! you savage monster!"

Each epithet was accompanied by a blow.

"Leave off, Sarah Ann!" cried the wretched man.

"Never until you down on your knees and 'umbly beg my parding."

"I do, I do."

"Oh, Smiffins, how could you do it?" she said.

The little man fell on his knees before her, and held up his hands in an attitude of supplication.

"I was druv to it," he said.

"What?"

Again the umbrella was brought into requisition.

"I say, leave off basting. It hurts," said Bigamini.

"How could you 'ave the 'art, that's what I want to know? 'Adn't you as good a business, and as good a wife as hany man could wish to 'ave? Oh, you beast—(blow). Oh, you little dirty beast" (another blow).

"Leave off, Sarah Ann."

"I shan't. What do you mean by it?" replied Mrs. Smiffins.

"I don't mean nothing."

"'Aven't I followed you through thick and thin into this furrin country, being 'elped by detectives, has hi hem-
ployed to trace you out?"

Bigamini made no answer.

"Hain't the bisniss gone to wrack and ruin?"

"Still so gently o'er me stealing," said Bigamini, changing his tactics. "Oh, those much loved tones. Oh, that sweet voice."

"It ain't sweet. I'm 'usky with a cold," replied practical Mrs. Smiffins.

Again she beat him savagely.

"Don't go on a-gamping me with that thing. I won't stand it," answered Bigamini.

"You wretch I won't you? What do you say to this? Hit's a warrant for your arrest. You've committed bigamy, and I can lock you up."

Bigamini began to tremble again.

"My dear, be quiet. You're the only girl I ever loved."

"Loved," cried Mrs. Smiffins in a tone of supreme disdain.

"Yes, my darling, fondly loved."

"Perhaps you've got another 'ussy over 'ere."

"No, my sweetest pet, my own lamb, my fond dove."

"Hit's my hopinion you're a perjured liar," said Mrs. Smiffins.

"And this is married life," sighed Bigamini. "Oh, my!"

"Don't sigh and groan."

"I ain't a-sighing and a-groaning."

"Yes, you are. Don't contradict me, or I'll let you know the reason why."

"Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, still crouching before the formidable being with the big umbrella.

"Well?"

"I'm a repentant being."

"A what?"

"I've seen the horror and folly of my ways."

"Not you."

"So 'elp me Bob, I have. Oh! Sarah Ann, kiss her own Smif-fins."

"I hain't hagoing to do nothing of the sort until I see if this is ginnywine or not," replied Sarah Ann, flatly.

"It is; upon my bended knees I swear it. Oh! Sarah Ann, the strong should always be merciful. Kiss her own Smiff."

"Will you come 'ome along 'o me?"

"Yes, I will. But where's—you know—where's number two, the wretched woman who beguiled me and stole me from you?"

"She's in the 'ospital," replied Mrs. Smiffins, calmly.

"In the 'ospital!"

"Yes; she and me met one night in the New Cut, and I went for her with the goose. She's been very bad ever since. They say her leg's broken, and one eye's out, and her left arm'll never be of any use to her no more."

This terrible announcement of the awful fate which had befallen the second wife of the unhappy Bigamini had a peculiar effect upon him.

He danced with rage, and actually struck his better half in the eye.

"What," he said, as she fell into Mr. Mole's arms, "you have done that, have you? Hang me, if I don't serve you the same. Get out; be off! Vanish!"

The spirit he plucked up all at once was wonderful.

"E's 'it me. Oh! the brute. It ain't the first time though. I'll lock him up for it. Call a police."

"Bother the police," replied Bigamini. "Hold her tight, Mr. Mole; we're fellow-sufferers; hold her like a man."

"It's all very well to say hold her," said Mr. Mole, "but she's heavy, and I don't like other men's leavings. Perhaps she'll fasten on to me."

"I'd do the same for you. Don't be downhearted; stick on to her."

"Will he? I'd like to see him," said Mrs. Smiffins.

She twisted herself out of Mr. Mole's grasp, and, dealing him a blow with her umbrella, added—

"You're another of them, are you? Take that, and that."

"My dear madam," said Mr. Mole, putting his hands over his head to protect it.

"I'll let you know."

"After um," said Monday, eagerly. "Go 'long, mum. He's gone. Sharp's um word."

Mrs. Smiffins left off belabouring Mr. Mole, and ran after her husband.

She overtook him in the street, but, doubling, he gave her the slip, and was soon tearing up the street.

Mrs. Smiffins, who had followed him all the way from London on the strength of information supplied by detectives, endeavoured to overtake him.

Her efforts were vain.

He flew on the wings of the wind, and she returned to the hotel where she was lodging, determined to be on the lookout for him next day.

Mr. Mole was glad to be released from such a termagant.

"Monday," he said timidly, "is that she fiend gone?"

"Yes, sare; um gone right enough."

"Thank heaven for that crowning mercy" replied Mr. Mole. "Give me some more wine, my sable Ganymede. Be my cup-bearer, Monday."

"Yes, sare," replied Monday.

"Here's confusion to all women, married or unmarried," said Mr. Mole.

"Not all, sare," replied Monday, with a grin.

"I don't know. There may be some good women, but I'll be jiggered if I've had the luck to meet with any of them, Monday."

"That's because you don't look in the right place, sare."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in thar," said Monday.

His wife Ada entered, carrying in her arms young Jack Harkaway.

"Ah! Mast' Jack; 'ow um do, young Mast' Jack?" asked Monday, patting the little fellow on the head.

The child looked up and crowed at him.

"He frets after his ma," said Ada.

"Poor dear!" cried Mr. Mole. "I suppose he does. Bless his heart! I fear he'll have to fret about his father next."

"Indeed! Has any thing happened to Mr. Harkaway, sir?"

"There is a report that he's captured by the brigands."

"Oh, dear me! What bad news!" exclaimed Ada, in dismay.

"I hope it may not be true, but it would be sad if mother and father should be taken prisoners by these wretches."

"It's a pity that we ever left England, sir."

"So it is. Never mind. At the last moment I shall show these Naples people what I am made of," cried Mr. Mole.

"You, sir!"

"Yes, my dear. I will rescue Harkaway and his wife too, when the time comes. Wait a bit. I am letting Carden and Harvey, and that bumptious little man they call the coxswain do what they can, and in due time I shall come and show them what I can do."

"Mist' Mole, him do it," said Monday.

"Yes," answered Mole grandly, "I'm like a race-horse, and always come with a rush when I'm called."

"I hope, sir, you will put every thing right," answered Ada, rocking the child in her arms.

He was a fine boy, going on for four years of age.

But being very sleepy, and missing his father and mother, he was more inclined to sleep or cry than talk.

"Now my little man," said Mr. Mole, "how do you find yourself?"

The little fellow looked up proudly.

"I want to go and kill brigands," he said.

"What for?"

"Because they keep my mamma from me. Ada told me so, and if my papa can't kill the brigands, I should like to go and hit them with my whip, and shoot them with my gun."

Mr. Mole was delighted at this declaration of young Jack Harkaway.

"Bravo," he cried, "the youngster's made of the right stuff, eh?"

"Him chip of um old block, sare, and when say that, can't say any more," answered Monday.

"Bless his little heart," said Ada, kissing him; "he forgets nothing he hears."

"Good-night," said Mr. Mole. "Take him to bed, Ada, and tell him we'll soon have his mamma back."

The young one waved his hand.

"Ta, ta, Mole," he said.

Monday laughed.

"Ain't he got um name pat?" he exclaimed. "Oh, he's

a wonder; that child am um living wonder, and young Jack will be um father all over."

"Good-night," said Mr. Mole. "Bye, bye, little man, only you might teach him to put the mister before my name. I like a handle, remember that, Mrs. Matabella."

Ada bore her young charge away, promising that he should be more respectful in the future.

Mr. Mole poured out a tumbler of wine, which he drank carefully.

"Monday," he said, "it's my opinion that child will turn out a regular trump."

"Never had no doubt umself, sare."

"To-morrow I shall go out and indulge in the pleasant excitement of brigand-hunting."

"You, sare?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Mole threw himself in the arm-chair, and drank a other brimming tumbler of iced Lachryma Christi.

"This wine improves on acquaintance," he said, with an appreciative smack of the lips. "Do you know, Monday, I rather like Naples."

"It fine place, sare, if no brigand thief."

"Bother the brigands! What are they after all? Why, I'd undertake to eat a dozen of them before breakfast."

"Brigand rather tough, sare," said Monday.

It happened that Mr. Mole's back was to the door.

He did not see Carden, Harvey, and the little coxswain, who had come in search of him.

They heard him say that he would eat a dozen brigands before breakfast, and stopping short, they made signs to Monday not to betray their presence, while they remained perfectly quiet in the doorway.

"The fact is," said Mr. Mole, lighting a cigarette, "that these Oxford men are humbugs."

"Mast' Jack, not um 'umbug, sare," put in Monday.

"Yes, he is. A humbug, Monday, is a man who pretends to do that which he can't."

"Mist' Carden, him um 'umbug, sare?"

"Yes, he's the biggest humbug of the whole lot."

"What for him so big?"

"Didn't I see the brigand beat him in single combat, disarm him, and generously give him his life?"

"Poor Mist' Carden, him bad luck."

"It was want of skill. Do you think, Matabella, that I would have accepted my life on those terms?"

"No, sare, you brave man, sare."

"Of course I am. I have proved my bravery on a hundred fields. Give me some more of that excellent tippie."

"What um think of Mist' Harvey, sare?" asked Monday, as he filled his glass.

"Harvey has his good points, but he was always a rank coward."

"And um little coxswain, sare?"

"Oh, he's a Cambridge man, and I needn't tell you that the sight of blood would make a Cambridge man run a mile," answered Mr. Mole.

Suddenly the three university men stepped forward.

They stood before the astonished Mole.

"Hallo, my dear boys!" he said, cheerfully, "where did you spring from? This is an unexpected pleasure. Just whiling away an hour in a little friendly chat with poor Monday."

Carden looked fiercely at Mr. Mole.

"So I'm the biggest humbug of the lot, am I?" he said.

"Ha, ha! I saw you listening," replied Mole.

"Saw me?"

"Yes. I saw you, you sly dog, and you know it isn't wise to praise a man before his eyes, so I ran you down for the fun of the thing."

"And I'm a rank coward, am I?" said Harvey.

"Chaff, Harvey, all chaff."

"What do you mean, by saying that a Cambridge man will run a mile at the sight of blood?" demanded the little coxswain, angrily.

"So he will, Walter; so he will."

"How can you prove it?"

"My dear boy, will not a brave man, if he sees blood being shed, run a mile, or two miles, to succour the distressed?"

"That's one way of getting out of it," said Walter, with a half smile.

"Look here, boys," exclaimed Mole valiantly, "what is the use of squabbling amongst ourselves? The man who can't stand chaff isn't worth a rap. What I say is, let us go and rescue Harkaway and his wife."

"That's very good advice," replied Carden.

"Let me be your leader," continued Mole.

"Good again," said Harvey.

"I will lead you to Torre del Greco. We will search the base of Mount Vesuvius together."

"Something must be done," remarked Carden.

"It shall. If Jack doesn't turn up to-night, we will start together to-morrow, early, and let our motto be——"

"What?"

"Jack Harkaway, and success to ourselves."

"Mr. Mole's got some pluck in him, after all," observed Walter.

"His heart's in the right place," replied Harvey.

"He can fight when he likes, I think," said Carden.

"My dear fellows, I don't want to crack myself up, but I'm as bold as a lion when occasion requires," answered Mr. Mole.

"Shake hands," said Carden; "we will rescue Harkaway."

The dinner-bell rang.

"Only time to dress. Don't say any thing to frighten the ladies," said Harvey. "But let us all think of the events of to-morrow."

Each repeated the word "To-morrow," and, quitting Monday's room, they went up stairs to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER XLV.

HOW JACK GOT ON.

WHEN Harkaway quitted his companions to go in search of the brigand chief, he mounted his horse and rode slowly along the road leading to Vesuvius.

The volcano had for some time past been throwing up ashes and jets of fire.

An eruption was expected.

The day was fine and clear as only a Neapolitan sky can be. Jack had no very decided plan of action.

He did not want to attack the brigands, if he saw them.

His hope was that either he or his friends would find out their haunts, and be able to capture them with an overwhelming force of soldiers.

He had been riding for a couple of miles or more without seeing anyone but a few peasantry.

The rich vines, weighed down with their ruby fruit, were to be seen clinging to tree and hedgerow.

He turned out of the high road to admire the scenery, and went across country.

The huge mountain served as a guide.

It stood out grandly against the blue sky, and seemed to beckon him on to his destination with invisible arms.

Suddenly a cheery voice exclaimed—

“Good-morning, sir; or, as they say here, ‘*buon giorno, signor.*’”

It was Bigamini.

“Ah, my prince of tailors and king of bigamists!” replied Jack, who was in an exultant temper, “you have come in time to be of service to me.”

“If Mr. Harkaway requires the services of a miserable Bigamini, he can command them, for, miserable though I am, I do esteem it an honour to do any thing for a gentleman and a countryman.”

“Do you know this neighbourhood?” asked Jack.

“Indifferently well, sir.”

“I have heard that brigands have been seen about here.”

“I’ve seen them, sir,” answered Bigamini, lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper.

“You?”

“Yes, within the hour.”

“Where were they?”

“Hiding among the vines on the Portici road, and if you take my tip, sir, you’ll turn back for to-day.”

The cunning spy knew very well that Jack was not at all likely to do any thing of the sort.

Danger had a sort of fascination for him.

He had come out to find the brigands, and he was not going to prove himself a coward at the first alarm and return.

In his belt were pistols, in his holster pistols, and he carried a clanking sword, as well as a rifle slung over his shoulder.

What had he to fear?

“No, my little friend,” he said, “I will not go back; that is not my form.”

“Well, sir, if any thing should happen, you’ll admit afterwards that I warned you.”

"Certainly."

"I'm sorry I can't come with you, sir," continued Bigamini.

"Why not?"

The little man hesitated.

"You'll laugh at me, Mr. Harkaway, and I can't bear being chaffed by the likes of you."

"Am I very different from any body else?" inquired Jack, with a smile.

"Yes, sir; you're a 'ero."

"A what?"

"A regular 'ero. I'm only a poor tailor, and I can work at my trade and make good money any where, but the brigands have given me a turn, and I shall have to go elsewhere."

"How do you know that they were brigands?" asked Jack.

"I've been copped by them, and I couldn't mistake them."

"How were they dressed?"

"Like labourers, sir. They've got some game on, sir," answered Bigamini.

"Well, good-bye, my little man. If you won't come with me, I don't want to drag you into danger," said Jack.

"I'll come as far as the stream with you, sir."

"What stream?"

"In the valley there is a stream, and I had some difficulty in finding the ford."

"The ford?"

"Yes, sir. It may be of use to you to know where it is."

"Thank you. Trot along," replied Jack.

Bigamini started off, and Jack followed him over the uneven ground, little dreaming that in his path lay the greatest danger of his life.

In the course of half an hour Jack and Bigamini came to the banks of the stream.

The depth might have been three feet, but as there had not been much rain lately, the current was not over and above strong.

"Go across there, sir," said Bigamini.

"All right. Thank you, once more."

"Good-bye, sir; I'm off. We may be shot at any moment."

Jack's lips curled with scorn.

Bigamini started off, running as hard as he could.



“AS THE HORSE STUMBLED, JACK FELL.”
*Evonnesiace. Brigande, ** page 23.*

But he had not gone far before he sank down behind some vines, and lay hid.

Jack was riding a mettlesome charger.

Being a good horseman, he always liked to be well mounted.

He was very particular about his cattle.

"Soho! there," he exclaimed; "gently, lad. In you go."

The noble animal arched his neck proudly, and plunged into the boiling, seething stream.

Scarcely had he gone halfway across when he uttered a snort.

He stumbled.

Drawing up one leg, Jack saw that he had caught it in some thing.

It looked like a large rat-trap, the sort of thing we call a gin.

Plunging on, the horse put his other leg in a similar contrivance.

Then his hind leg caught in a third.

The stream seemed to be full of these traps.

Jack, if he had seen some ill-looking ruffians among the bushes on the other side, would have known who put them there.

As he plunged about, Jack went over his head.

He fell against a rock which protruded above the water.

His forehead was badly cut.

He was unable to help himself, and was borne along by the current.

Infalibly he would have been drowned had not assistance been at hand.

But what sort of assistance?

A shrill whistle sounded from the quarter where Bigamini had concealed himself.

The little spy got up.

"I did that well," he muttered. "It wasn't a bad dodge to set rat-traps in the stream. They'll take him easy now."

Half a dozen men made their appearance.

They ran along the bank.

Half of them dashed into the stream.

Jack, half stunned and nearly drowned, was dragged to shore.

A man with one arm was in command of this party.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"No, signor," replied one of the men; "only a little hurt."

"Tear down a hurdle from that fence, and place him on it."

The brigands who, by Barboni's orders, had been lying in wait for him, lost no time in obeying the lieutenant's orders.

A hurdle was torn down, and Jack cast upon it.

His arms and legs were fastened to the bars by ropes.

He could not move, and was perfectly helpless in the hands of his captors.

Helpless!

And without firing a shot!

The devilish ingenuity of the brigand chief had been only too successful.

Seeing that his work had been satisfactorily accomplished, Bigamini came forward.

"Ha, ha! Signor Hunstoni," he said, across the stream, "you've got a big bag this time—an almighty big bag!"

"Go back to Naples," replied Hunstoni, "and spread the report of his capture."

"Is there any hurry?"

"It's just as well that he should not see you when he opens his eyes."

"When he does, it will be to shut them again for ever, soon, won't it?" returned Bigamini.

"If I was the only one concerned, it would," replied Hunston, savagely.

"What does the chief mean to do?"

"How can I tell what the chief means to do?" answered Hunston.

"I thought——"

"Cut it, quick, or so help me Moses, I'll put a bullet in you, and let the daylight through your rascally carcase."

Hunston held up a pistol as he spoke.

Bigamini knew him too well not to feel sure that he would keep his word.

"I know I'm a miserable Bigamini," he said, backing gradually out of range.

"Be off."

"If I'd been a happy Smiffins, you wouldn't have dared to——"

Hunston cut short his words by deliberately firing at him.

If he had not taken the precaution to back while he was talking, his little game on this eccentric planet would have been over.

Taking to his heels, he ran back to Naples.

The sound of the shot seemed to rouse Jack.

He opened his eyes.

He looked round, and the first face that met his gaze was that of the lieutenant of the brigand band.

Closing his eyes again, he seemed as if to wish to shut out a bad dream.

Hunston smiled sardonically.

Touching him on the shoulder with the butt end of his pistol, he said—

“You’re awake right enough. Look up!”

That face!

That voice!

There could be no further doubt about the matter.

“Hunston!” ejaculated Harkaway.

“Yes, I am Hunston. What is there to be surprised at in that?”

“Hunston!” murmured Jack, again.

“Did you think you had done with me for ever, eh? If you did, you were cursedly mistaken,” said Hunston.

He laughed mockingly.

The horse, hampered as he was, struggled vainly to free himself.

With two legs broken the spendid animal sank down in the stream to die.

He was quickly drowned.

“Get a horse out of the nearest stable,” said Hunston.

“Si, signor.”

“Shoot the first man who resists, and let us take our prisoner to the chief.”

“Si, signor,” again replied the man he spoke to.

Jack was recovering himself now.

The pain caused by the stunning blow on his forehead against the rock passed away.

He was fully alive to the peril of his situation.

The heat of the sun was beginning to dry his wet and dripping clothes.

Sitting down on the grass, Hunston lighted his pipe.

“You didn’t expect to find that I had taken service with your friends the brigands, eh, Harkaway?” he said, tauntingly.

“I did not.”

“I’m like a bad shilling, sure to turn up.”

“What do you mean to do with me?” asked Jack.

"I'd kill you if I had my way; make a clean sweep of you—kill you right out."

"I suppose you can if you like."

"No, Barboni is a curious sort of beggar, but I have some influence over him," answered Hunston.

This information put Jack comparatively at his ease.

There was no immediate fear of death.

He was out of present danger.

"How do you find yourself, old stick?" asked Hunston, jovially.

As we know, he was not above insulting a fallen enemy.

He liked to triumph over Harkaway.

It just suited his mean and narrow mind.

Jack made no answer.

"Oh, you can sulk if you like. Perhaps you'll be glad of someone to talk to presently."

He took a sip out of a brandy flask.

"I'll tell Emily you've arrived at the cave," he added.

"What of her?" asked Jack, roused from his sullied stupor.

"Oh, that touches you, does it?"

"What of my wife?"

"Nothing much. We are getting on very well together."

"I trust she is free from insult."

"I think she likes me better than she does Darrel."

"What Darrel?"

"Eh?"

"Do you mean Lord Darrel—Gus Darrel?"

"Oh, I've made you find your tongue at last have I?" said Hunston.

"Is Darrel of ours with you."

"He is."

"God defend me from my enemies!" murmured Jack, solemnly.

"Here comes the nag," exclaimed Hunston. "You won't find it very easy going on that hurdle, but I can't help that."

Jack closed his eyes again, to keep out the burning sun.

He gave himself up to his reflections.

His thoughts were very bitter.

Soon the horse was harnessed to the hurdle, and the word being given by Hunston, the little party began to move by unfrequented routes to the cave.

It was a long journey.

Hunston walked in front, pistol in hand and pipe in mouth.

"Wake up that jade," he replied. "We mustn't lose time."

The horse was whipped up, and they went at a steady pace towards the Volturmo. Jack was a prisoner once more.

Fortune's wheel had taken a turn.

He, as well as his wife, was in the power of Barboni.

And that power was backed up, if not shared, by Hunston and Gus Darrel.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"FIRE, AND YOU KILL YOUR FRIEND."

THE three friends, accompanied by Mr. Mole, waited until the following day for the appearance of Jack.

When they saw nothing of him, they could not doubt that he had fallen a victim to the brigand chief, and was either dead or captured.

The Countessa di Malafedi called upon them, and protested that she was very sorry to hear of Mr. Harkaway's misfortune.

It was a great pity, she thought, that he had not long ago left Barboni to the care of the police and the soldiers.

From the first she had expected no good would come of his chivalrous attempt to capture such a fox as the chief of the brigands.

Carden declared that her protestations of sorrow were nothing but hypocrisy.

He ordered a carriage and drove to the general's house.

Cialdini received him, as usual, with civility, and assured him that he had sent soldiers in every direction.

In addition to which, the police were actively at work.

The three friends were profoundly affected at the news of Jack's capture.

Harvey especially.

At first they were inclined to believe it an idle rumour.

But as day after day slipped by, and no tidings came of the missing one, they could no longer doubt that he was, in reality, a wretched prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

They were anxious to do all that lay in their power to rescue him.

But what could they do?

How were they to proceed?

Fighting Barboni was like battling with a shadow, ever shifting its position.

"Something must be done," said Harvey, on the morning of the third day after that on which Jack had promised to return.

"Do you believe the rumours that are flying about?" asked Carden.

"I do."

"In fact, you are satisfied that Barboni has captured Jack?"

"Undoubtedly; I don't think he is dead"—here Harvey brushed away a tear without being ashamed of it—"or we should have had his head sent us; and I have made up my mind."

"To what?" asked Carden.

"I will not sleep in a bed again until I find Harkaway."

"Bravo!" cried the little coxswain; "that's just how I feel."

"I'm with you, through thick and thin," said Carden.

"As for me," said Mr. Mole, "I cordially agree with Harvey. None of us ought to sleep in beds, or, indeed, sleep at all, though exhausted nature must be recruited, until our dear friend Harkaway is recovered."

"Instead of jawing, and humming and hawing," said Walter Campbell, "I think it would be more to our credit if we were to do some thing."

"Hear! hear!" from Carden.

"I will accompany you any where, and expose myself to the danger of the brigands' guns," said Mole.

"Let us have a carriage and take a tent with us and some provisions, and camp near where I fought with the brigand," said Carden.

"Not a bad idea," replied Harvey.

"You mean close to Castel Inferno?" said the little coxswain.

"Yes; a quarter of a mile or so from the Prince di Villanova's. You know my theory about the identity of the prince and the brigand."

"We will go," replied Mole. "I had hoped to devote my

time to teaching young Harkaway his letters, as I will not eat the bread of idleness anywhere."

"You're welcome, Mr. Mole," said Harvey.

"I know it; if I did not feel sure of it I would not stay an hour in this house. I am poor—miserably poor, for I have lost my all; but, gentlemen, I beg to assure you that Isaac Mole preserves his independence."

"Young Jack," said Harvey, "has his nurse always about him, and Hilda attends to him in the absence of his mother."

"What is that to the superior instruction which I should be able to impart to his infant mind?"

"It's good enough for the present," answered Harvey, "and I am sure that you will be doing a greater kindness to Mr. and Mrs. Harkaway in getting them out of captivity than by wasting your valuable efforts in what you call imparting instruction to the infant mind."

"Do you respect my motives, Harvey?"

"Of course I do."

"And appreciate my principle?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now I will buckle on the sword and figuratively don my armour, gird up my loins, and work vengeance upon those brigands," replied Mr. Mole.

"Is it settled that we go out and camp, so as to be on the watch night and day?" asked Carden.

"I am agreeable," replied Harvey.

"No sacrifice that I can make will be too great to show my devotion to Harkaway," remarked the little coxswain.

"We all love him," said Harvey, into whose eye stole another tear as he thought of the probable fate of his friend.

"We do," replied the others, in chorus.

"And he deserves it," said Mole, "for, if ever there was a good-hearted friend in this world—though a little wayward at times—a little wayward——"

"Don't qualify your praise," said Harvey.

"I must say it, Harvey, for I have had trials in the past through that boy; but this I will aver and maintain, that a better fellow than Harkaway never breathed."

"We're all agreed on that point," said Carden, "and now we'll try and show him what we can do for him. If you'll all be ready in a couple of hours, I'll go and see after the camp furniture, stores, etc."

No one had any better suggestion to make, and Carden at once set about his project.

In a very short time he had purchased every thing that was required, and about an hour before sunset a carriage conveyed the friends towards Castel Inferno.

They crossed the Volturno as usual, and, selecting a favourable spot, pitched their tent and made themselves as comfortable as they could under the circumstances.

The carriage returned to Naples, being taken back in the ferry boat over the river.

Hilda was very much grieved at this fresh campaign; but she knew it was Harvey's duty to go, and she was too good and noble a wife to offer any remonstrance in such a case.

Mr. Mole carried his cask with him, and declared, as usual, that it only contained water.

If this was true, and there was a spring in the neighbourhood, his continually putting his lips to the cask seemed rather superfluous.

The night was passed in that delightful climate without any inconvenience, sentries being posted every four hours to guard against a surprise.

Scarcely had day broken when the little coxswain, who was on guard, gave the alarm.

"Brigands in front!" he cried.

Everyone was on the alert in a moment.

Harvey and Carden stood a little in the background and reconnoitred.

Before them they saw a party of a dozen brigands, with Barboni at their head.

In their midst they carried some thing which the friends could not distinctly make out.

"Shall I fire?" asked the little coxswain, eagerly.

"The odds are three to one, and Mole doesn't count for much," said Harvey.

Very naturally he hesitated.

If he provoked a return fire, they might all be slaughtered.

"We are armed with breech-loaders," replied Carden. "I can fire ten shots a minute."

"Chance it, if you like," said Harvey.

"Call Mole up."

Harvey looked round for Mr. Mole, who had retreated into the tent again at the sight of brigands in force, and was pretending to sleep the sleep of the just.

"Never mind Mole," said Harvey. "It only increases the odds to four to one. That isn't much."

"Are you going to let these fellows walk over?" said the little coxswain, impatiently.

"Not much," replied Harvey.

"Make ready," cried Carden.

There was a pause, only broken by the clicking of the locks of the guns.

"Present!"

Where were the brigands about?

Barboni stood within easy range of the rifles of the Englishmen, and his men seemed to be entirely occupied in contemplating what they held in their midst.

The next moment the word "Fire!" would be given, and blood would be shed.

Suddenly he waved his arm.

Carden hesitated to give the word, and it was well he did.

At his signal, the brigands collected in the rear of their leader, and raised up a hurdle on which was bound the body of a man.

Six men pointed their weapons at him.

To their intense horror, the friends recognised the form and features of Jack Harkaway.

He was the man bound on the hurdle.

His arms were stretched in different directions, and his legs parted in the form of a triangle.

"Fire, gentlemen, if you like," said Barboni; "but you kill your friend."

A sardonic grin overspread his countenance.

Carden, Harvey, and the little coxswain lowered their arms.

They shrank back aghast.

A faint voice came from the form bound to the hurdle.

"Fire! fire! Kill that fiend and let me take my fate."

"Gentlemen," again said the brigand, in the blindest of tones, "you will please yourselves. If you fire you may kill or wound the 'fiend,' as Mr. Harkaway elegantly calls me."

"And you'd be no loss to genteel society," remarked the coxswain, between his teeth.

"But, gentlemen," continued Barboni, "you are already covered by six rifles, and an equal number threaten your friend."

A groan burst from Jack.

"So, you see, if I fell, I should gain after all, for it is

nearly certain you then would share my fate, and there would not be the shadow of a chance for Mr. Harkaway."

The reasoning was too self-evident to bear contradiction.

The word of command died away on Carden's lips, and the three friends grounded their rifles.

"I am very sorry, Harkaway, old man," said Carden, "that we can do nothing for you at present."

"Nor can you in future," cried Barboni.

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Harkaway will always accompany us in this fashion, and when I am threatened by you or the soldiers, I shall place him in the front, so that the result of an attack will be his death."

"Monster!"

"As you please," said Barboni, shrugging his shoulders.

"You have the ingenuity of your master," replied Carden.

"Who is that? I own no master."

"Satan."

Barboni laughed demoniacally.

"Laugh away," said Carden; "your time will come, depend upon that."

"You talk like a child, Signor Carden," answered the brigand.

"Time will show."

"I am content to wait, more especially as I have the best of the situation. Take my advice and go home; you see you can do nothing."

Carden was silent.

Barboni spoke only too truly.

"Gentlemen, I have the honour to wish you a very good day," continued Barboni.

"We shall meet again."

"Very possibly."

"And when we do——"

"Keep your threats for those whom they may frighten; as for me, I laugh them to scorn," interrupted Barboni.

He gave his peculiar whistle, which sounded shrill and clear on the sharp morning air.

Slowly the men began to retreat.

They walked backwards, always holding up Harkaway to cover them.

Gnashing his teeth with rage, Carden was obliged to let them go.

In a few minutes they had vanished as mysteriously as they had come, and were lost to sight behind some rocks.

The little coxswain was about to make a dash.

Carden pulled him back.

"Steady, young one," he said; "it's no use to lay down your life now."

"But they're walking off with Jack."

"Can't be helped."

"Blow those brigands! Are they always to have the best of us?" said Walter, in a tone of vexation.

"I hope not."

"One thing is jolly," said Harvey.

"What is that?"

"Jack's alive, and they don't mean to kill him just yet."

"We are completely licked at present," said Carden, "and there is nothing like owning it when one is."

"If we shouldn't have risked Jack's life, I'd have had a cut at them, if I'd died for it," said Walter.

"So would we all. But be sensible, little man," answered Carden.

"So I am."

"Well, what could we have done? What can we do now? The fact is, we must get back to Naples, and see if we can't ransom Jack."

At this juncture Mr. Mole emerged from the tent.

He had satisfied himself that there was no further danger, and he kept his courage up while Barboni was talking by repeatedly sipping at his cask.

"What's all this?" he said. "I've been fast asleep. Why the deuce didn't you call me, if there was any thing going on? You know I am always ready."

Harvey told him what had occurred.

"You don't mean to say that poor Harkaway was close to you?" said Mole.

"Yes."

"And you did nothing to save him? Come, I say, Carden, you call yourself a man of courage, and you didn't strike a blow for 'Auld Lang Syne!'"

"How could we do so?" asked Carden.

"What a curious thing it is that you boys are no use unless you have a man to guide you."

"It's no use talking."

"Yes, it is. Excuse me, but—there! hang it all! I can't

control myself. You are a pack of cowards!" cried Mr. Mole.

"What would you have done?" asked Walter, smiling.

"Made a charge. Oh, you don't know me! I'd have had Jack away from them by hook or by crook."

"Would you?" said Walter.

"Certainly! For goodness' sake don't let me oversleep myself another time," answered Mr. Mole.

He pretended to be in a state of great excitement for some time, but no one took any further notice of him.

In an hour's time the friends struck their tent, and each carrying something, returned sadly to Naples.

Barboni the brigand had triumphed once more.

Their only consolation was that they knew Jack's fate, and that it is always safe to say—

"While there is life there is hope!"

But hope was nearly extinguished by despair and annoyance.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A BLACK GHOST.

"EVERYBODY else fail, um try to do it, mum."

The speaker was Monday.

Hilda had been much concerned about the capture of Jack and Emily by Barboni.

She did not see her way clearly to getting them out of the confinement in which they were held.

But she fancied that something might be done by Monday's assistance.

Harvey, Carden, and the little coxswain, with Mr. Mole had returned defeated.

"Let us say nothing to anybody, Monday," said Hilda. "My idea is this. You shall go to Castel Inferno, where Mr. Carden thinks the brigand chief lives, and play the part of a black ghost."

"But Monday flesh and blood, mum."

"Yes, yes; I want you to pretend to be a black ghost, and dress in your wild manner."

"Just as I was in Limbi?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, that easily done, mum," said Monday.

"You will frighten the ignorant creatures who serve the cause of Barboni, and you will be very likely to bring back important information."

"P'raps lose um head, mum," said Monday.

"Even if you do, it is your duty to do what you can for your master," replied Hilda.

"Um lay down ten, twenty, thirty lives, if um had um, for Mast' Jack," said Monday.

"Very well," replied Hilda. "Say nothing to anyone, not even to your wife, and start to Castel Inferno."

"Yes, mum."

"Remember you're a ghost, and see if you cannot communicate in some way with Harkaway and Emily."

"Um bound to do it," said Monday, confidently.

The faithful fellow had been talking to Hilda for some time, and declared that he was willing to die for his master, if necessary.

The result of this conversation was that Monday should try and discover where Jack was.

He readily undertook the task.

Waiting until night came, he left a letter on the table of the pantry to inform his wife that he should be away for a few days on business.

Then he left Naples and walked towards Castel Inferno, which he thought was the most likely spot for the brigands to be located.

He had heard the arguments of the young gentlemen, and believed, with Carden, that if Villanova was not Barboni, he at least was mixed up with him.

It was a magnificent night when he reached the Volturno.

Thousands of stars studded the heavens, while the moon reflected itself in the swiftly-running tide.

Without any hesitation, Monday threw off his hat and his clothes, which he hid behind a bush.

Round his waist he wore a cloth, just as he had done when Harkaway first saw him in his primæval forest.

His only weapon was a long, sharp, murderous-looking knife, which was secured in his waistband.

Monday felt himself wild again.

His eye burned with a dangerous fire, he drew himself up to his full height, as if glorying in his strength, and his nostrils dilated with pride.

Once more he was Matabella, King of Limbi.

Pausing a moment on the edge of the stream, he plunged in head first and swam across, though there was a very swift current to fight against.

He dived and sported like a duck, dashing the water on all sides, floating on his side, swimming on his back, and performing other tricks which showed he was thoroughly at home in the liquid element.

It was strange to see how his wild nature asserted itself.

He had thrown off the garments of civilization.

With this act he seemed again to be a savage.

Reaching the other side, he shook off the water, and began his march to the castle.

Sometimes he ran with the fleetness of a deer.

At others he crouched and glided like a snake.

All the tricks and stratagems of savage warfare came into his mind.

He was, every inch of him, a warrior of Limbi.

The black was in splendid condition.

Fine, athletic fellow as he was, he appeared a match for half a dozen lazy, effeminate Neapolitan brigands.

When day broke, he was not far from the castle.

His movements were now very cautious.

Suddenly he dived down amongst some fern.

A man was coming towards him.

It was a brigand.

He knew that by the slouched hat, the hangdog look, the uncouth manner, and the carbine, together with the dagger and pistols stuck in his belt.

Monday grasped his knife firmly.

No thought of pity or compassion crossed his mind.

He had gone on the warpath, and his ears were deaf to the whisperings of Christianity and humanity.

All his instinct told him in those dread hours was, that his master was in the power of the brigands, and consequently brigands were his natural enemies.

To kill them was a virtue.

The man, whistling carelessly, came close to Monday.

In an instant the black sprang upon him like a tiger, uttering a subdued howl as he caught him by the throat.

The next moment Monday gave a heavy blow with his weapon.

The brigand fell to the ground a corpse.

A smile of intense satisfaction flitted across Monday's face.

"One of the villains gone to um bad spirits," he muttered. Spurning the dead body with his foot, he again crept along.

He had not gone far before he saw another brigand standing in a listless manner before the entrance to a cave.

The man had been on guard all night, and was asleep.

In a short time he would be relieved.

But his companions were enjoying their rest in the interior, and the hour for relieving guard had not yet come.

Crawling on his belly, as he had done many a time and oft in his native land when he wanted to kill an unsuspecting enemy, he approached the sentry.

When he was close to him, he crawled over a stick, which broke with a loud snap.

The sentry looked round.

Immediately Monday jumped to his feet in front of the brigand, who was so astonished that he stood rooted to the spot.

He thought he saw a ghost.

What could the black, naked thing in front of him be but an evil spirit?

The Neapolitans are the most weak-minded and superstitious people in Italy.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the brigand thought he saw a ghost.

Taking advantage of this surprise, Monday darted upon the fellow, and stabbed him fatally.

He fell without a groan.

"Oh, kafoozlum!" muttered Monday; "um found the cave. Mast' Carden give um ears for this."

He had done what none of his master's friends could do.

Not hesitating for a moment, Monday cautiously passed through the aperture in the sandstone.

This brought him into the large, vault-like chamber outside the private cells and galleries.

About forty brigands were lying about in various places asleep.

Their number had been a good deal thinned lately by their continual conflicts with the troops.

Passing through these men, Monday entered a passage in front of him.

His purpose was to explore the cave, and, if possible, find out where Jack and Emily were confined.

He had not gone far before he saw a light.

It was but the feeble glimmer of an oil lamp, placed in a niche cut in the wall.

Yet it assisted the keen vision of the black.

It enabled him to see a brigand, who evidently was posted as a sentry, but he had fallen into a reverie, and was looking at a miniature of a woman.

Perhaps it was the girl he loved.

The girl who was to have been his wife if he had continued an honest man.

One who would not allow herself to love a brigand.

Who can tell?

Perhaps a life's romance was wrapt up in the little painting.

The man raised the senseless miniature to his lips.

He kissed the inanimate features with intense devotion.

A tear sprang to his eye, and he brushed it angrily away.

Was he thinking of the gulf that separated him from the fair and innocent reality?

Did his conscience reproach him for having fallen so low as to be a brigand, a murderer, and a thief?

He was not allowed much time to think.

Monday glided, snakelike, upon him, and that dreadful knife sent him to his last long sleep, with only a groan and gurgle.

Only long practice could have made the knife so deadly in Monday's hand.

There was never any necessity for him to strike twice.

Passing over the body of the guard, Monday took up the lamp and looked about him.

A door in the wall caught his eye.

It was merely draped by a piece of matting hung on a couple of nails.

Pushing this aside, he looked in.

On a mattress was a sleeping man.

One glance sufficed to show Monday that this was Harkaway.

A thick and heavy chain, fastened by a padlock to his right ankle, was attached to the wall by a large staple.

Creeping up to his master, Monday, whose heart was beating wildly, placed his hand upon his mouth to prevent him uttering a cry and giving the alarm.

Then he whispered in his ear—

“Mast’ Jack.”

Harkaway’s slumber was disturbed by bad dreams.

“Let me die like a man,” he murmured, restlessly. “What! would you kill me in my sleep? Ccwards!”

“Mast’ Jack. Um must wake up,” continued Monday.

The silence was profound, and the scene was a remarkable one for its weird and rugged grandeur.

Risking his life in his devotion to his young master knelt the black.

Harkaway, chained and captive as he was, yet looking noble and unsubdued, lying on a rude pallet, the sole furniture of the vault.

The little lamp’s sickly rays, dimly illuminating the dimensions of the vault, which, in its roughness, seemed to have been hacked and hewed out of the solid rock by the hand of some giant of old time.

Suddenly Jack woke up.

He only saw the kneeling figure of Monday, and fancying he was still dreaming, he closed his eyes wearily.

“I dreamt of brigands just now,” he exclaimed, “and my thoughts have gone back to my wanderings amongst the Malays. Ah, if I only had my faithful Monday here.”

“Him come, sare.”

“What!”

Jack sat up and rubbed his eyes.

“Can it be you, Monday?” he exclaimed. “How did you get here? Have Carden and the other fellows stormed and taken the cave?”

“No, sare. They do no good, none of them, so Missey Hilda and I make up our minds I go and find um cave.”

By this time Jack was thoroughly awake.

He saw how things stood in a moment.

“Thank you, Monday, old fellow,” he said; “I thought my friends would not desert me.”

“Never, sare.”

“Are the brigands awake yet?”

“Not yet, sare.”

“How did you pass the sentries?”

Monday, with a grim smile, pointed to his knife, which was covered with half-dried blood.

“Ha!” said Jack, “you have killed some?”

“Only few, sare. Two, three, four. Quite um trifle.”

"Look here, Monday, old boy," said Jack, "I shall never forget your bravery."

"Say nothing 'bout that, sare."

"You've done a plucky thing."

"Um warrior of Limbo 'gain, sare," replied Monday, proudly, "and um like it."

Jack smiled faintly.

"You have found out the brigand's cave," said Jack, "and that is a most important step. Go back to Naples at once."

"You come too, sare?"

"No."

"You not come, Mast' Jack?" said Monday, in profound astonishment.

"It is impossible. See how I am chained."

"Get um chain off somehow."

"You can't. It would take hours, even if you had proper tools; and, brave as you are, you can't hope to fight a horde of brigands. No, you must go back at once."

"What do then, sare?" asked Monday.

"Bring Carden, Harvey, Campbell, and a lot of soldiers, to surprise the cave in the night."

"Why not show um fight, sare?"

"Because they will expose me tied to a hurdle in the front of the battle, and I don't want to croak yet, if I can help it," answered Jack.

"All right, sare. Keep up um pluck," said Monday.

"I'll try. And now be off, Monday. God bless you, my true friend!" exclaimed Jack, warmly.

Monday raised Jack's hand to his lips, and kissed it affectionately.

"You understand?" said Jack.

"Got um lesson by heart, sare."

"Don't be rash. Remember that my life and my wife's depend upon your discretion."

"Monday safe as the bank, sare," replied the black, who glided as noiselessly as he had come out of the vault.

Daybreak was just penetrating to the outer cave, and the brigands were slowly rising to prepare for the duties and fatigues of the day.

With a feeling the reverse of pleasant Monday made this discovery; but he had provided against such an emergency.

Placing his hand in his girdle, he took out a little phial of phosphorescent oil.

With the utmost rapidity he rubbed this all over his naked body.

The effect in the darkness was remarkable.

He seemed to be on fire.

The fanciful flames leapt all over him, as if he had just come out of a flaming bath.

His only chance of safety was adopting a bold course.

With a bound, he sprang forward, and stood in the midst of the brigands, grinning horribly and waving his hands.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HILDA'S BRAVE CONDUCT.

WHEN the brigands beheld a strange, uncouth, black-demon sort of figure in their midst, they shrank back.

They were frightened.

Their superstitious fears beset them.

What was this strange being surrounded by flames and smoke?

Where did he come from, and what was his object in coming?

Dancing about in the most fantastic manner, Monday gradually drew near the mouth of the cave.

Then uttering a fearful cry, and saying something in his own language, he vanished.

Not a shot was fired.

The brigands crossed themselves, and thought they had seen the devil.

Laughing to himself, Monday retreated as far as he could, and was soon out of danger.

Reaching the Volturno, he crossed the river as before, and finding his clothes where he had hidden them, he once more put on his civilised dress, and hastened back to Naples.

When he reached the city, he was so exhausted, that, after partaking of food and drink, he sank into a deep sleep which lasted for several hours.

Hilda was apprised of his return, and gave orders that he should on no account be disturbed.

Harvey and the others were very curious to know where he had been.

"You shall hear for yourselves," said Hilda, "when he wakes up."

"Where did you send him, Mrs. Harvey?" asked Carden.

"To the brigands' cave, to seek his master."

"If he found it," answered Carden, "he is cleverer than we have been able to show ourselves."

In a few hours Monday awoke, refreshed in mind and body.

He at once went into the drawing-room, where he found the ladies and gentlemen assembled.

Dinner was over, and the cool evening air penetrated through the jalousies at the open windows.

"Here he is," said Mr. Mole. "Shall I be spokesman? These black fellows, as I know from experience, are fond of exaggerating, and it will be as well if I subject him to a searching examination."

"As you like, sir," replied Harvey, "though I think we know Monday well enough by this time to feel that he will not deceive us."

"Take a chair, my man," remarked Mr. Mole.

"Um rather stand, sare," said Monday.

"Very well. Now tell us where you have been."

"To the brigands' cave, sare."

"Did you see Harkaway?"

"Yes, sare; um see Mast' Jack right enough."

"Bless us! This is incredible," said Mr. Mole. "Let us hear your adventures from beginning to end."

Monday accordingly related all that had occurred.

"There!" cried Carden, triumphantly; "what did I tell you? Didn't I always say the brigands were nested up close to Villanova's castle?"

"Upon my word," exclaimed Harvey, "this is great news."

"Immense!" observed the little coxswain. "We are no longer fighting with shadows."

"No, we can spot our enemies now," replied Carden.

"It's all up with Barboni, you bet," said the coxswain, with an air of determination.

"The thanks of this house," said Mr. Mole, "are due to our mutual friend, Monday."

Hilda rose, and taking Harvey's watch and chain from his waistcoat, presented them to the faithful black.

"Here is a present for you," she said.

"Quite right, my dear," exclaimed Harvey; "I'm glad you thought of it."

He never contradicted his wife. Everything she did was right in his eyes.

What did it matter that the watch and chain had cost eighty guineas?

Monday had deserved it.

The black's eyes were moist with emotion as he received this mark of affectionate esteem and regard.

"Me keep it for your sake, Missey Hilda—and yours too, Mast' Harvey, and thank you both for thinking of um poor black servant," he said.

"Don't run yourself down, old friend," said Harvey. "You know you're a prince, and only serve Jack as a sort of favour."

"No, sare," replied Monday; "me serve Mast' Jack as um right, because he save um life. Me wait on the others as favour. That all um difference."

He put on the watch and chain, and examined the lockets attached to the latter, which contained photographs of Harvey and Hilda, and regarded his new acquisition with all the pride that barbaric races attach to gold and trinkets.

"We must lose no time in following Harkaway's orders," remarked Carden.

"One company of soldiers will be enough, I should think," said Harvey.

"Lots."

"I suppose, Mr. Monday," said the little coxswain, "that you can find the place again?"

"Monday never forget any thing," was the reply.

"You must let me accompany you, this time," said Hilda.

"You!" cried Harvey, in amazement.

"Yes, my dear Dick," she continued; "I shall disguise myself as an Italian peasant woman. You know I can speak the language very well."

"But where's the good?"

"If you are repulsed, as you may be, I have my own idea."

"This is rash," said Harvey.

"Not more so than your own conduct."

"Of course we are bound to do all we can for Harkaway."

"And am I to do nothing for Emily? Do not think that women are only fit for sewing on buttons and nursing children. I believe that my sex are capable of higher things, and in this instance, I must have my way, please."

"Very well; you shall take a part in the drama, though I trust you will keep out of danger," said Harvey.

Hilda was satisfied with this assurance. Lily Cockles was surprised at Hilda's cool courage, and declared that she could not have made up her mind to go near the brigands if anybody had offered her a thousand pounds.

Hilda was grand in her determination.

Ever fearless, generous and enterprising, she came forward like a Jewish heroine of the olden time.

That evening Carden took Monday to General Cialdini's.

The magnificent discovery that the black had made was related to the commander-in chief.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the gallant old general was half mad with joy.

He had received a notice from Florence, then the capital of Italy, that he would be superseded if the brigands were not put down.

The scandal was becoming too great.

"If this nest of vipers is stamped out," he said, patting Monday on the back, "I believe I can get you an order of merit from King Victor Emmanuel himself."

"Um only want to get Mast' Jack out, sare," replied Monday, modestly.

That no time might be lost, it was arranged that the very next day a company of soldiers should go with the English "volunteers" to surprise the brigands in their cave, during the night.

Everyone felt confident of success.

Mr. Mole declared that he should commit terrible slaughter amongst the Amalekites, and put ninety-nine and a half per cent. of them to the edge of the sword.

Certainly the prospect looked encouraging.

Monday's discovery had altered the look of affairs altogether. There was no longer any mystery about the brigands.

They had a cave, and were to be found at a certain spot.

What was easier than to drop down upon and exterminate them as one would a brood of vipers?

This was the general opinion.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"I'VE GOT MY BILLET—LET ME DIE."

IN the morning Bigamini paid Monday a visit.

He saw that great preparations were being made, and was anxious to know the object of them.

"Going after the brigands?" asked Bigamini, carelessly.

"Yes," replied Monday, "um soon make short work of um brigands."

"How?"

"Me find out where um cave is," replied Monday, with an air of triumph.

"Indeed. How did you manage to do that?"

"That um secret which shan't tell you. Now we all go with soldiers and cut um up fine."

"Wish you luck," replied Bigamini.

"Seen um old woman since?" asked Monday, mischievously.

"No," answered Bigamini, "I've dodged her pretty well, and I shall have to cut Naples if she makes it too hot for me."

"Take um glass of wine before you go."

"Don't mind if I do."

Monday gave him something to drink and he took his leave rather hurriedly.

Going to a stable, he hired a horse, as he was often in the habit of doing.

Mounting the animal, he rode at his best speed towards the brigands' cave.

It was an idle day with the rascals.

They were lounging about inside or outside the cave, and seemed rather grave and frightened.

Everyone was talking about the black ghost which had paid them a visit on the previous night and killed three of their number.

Hunston was making a speech in Italian as Bigamini arrived.

"I tell you," he said, "that you are a parcel of fools. There are no such things as ghosts."

"Right, sir," said Bigamini. "I'll explain the ghost."

"Ah! Is it you, my prince of spies?" replied Hunston.

"Yes, sir. Can I speak with you privately?"

"Come into my private room. Is your news important?"

"Life and death, sir."

"Giacomo!" exclaimed Hunston.

A brigand saluted in military fashion.

"Telegraph for the chief.—quick. Lose no time," said Hunston, who, turning to the spy, added—

"Refresh yourself, my little man, and when Barboni arrives, I will send for you."

Bigamini thanked Hunston, and was at once the centre of attraction among the brigands.

He partook of refreshment, and laughed at them for their silly fears.

He declared that there was no such thing as ghosts, and he expected someone had come as a spy among them.

Many shook their heads and refused to believe this.

They had seen a fiery creature, surrounded by flames and smoke, which had danced about in their midst.

Some said it was an imp of Vesuvius.

All thought it forboded some great misfortune.

Presently Bigamini was sent for.

Barboni asked him a variety of questions, and seemed very grave when he heard the news that they were to be attacked.

"It seems to me," said Hunston, "that the game's up."

"Not while I breathe," replied Barboni, with an air of determination.

"What are we to do?"

"You know that we have two mitrailleuses—one on each side of the entrance to the cave."

"Well?"

"These machines can fire one hundred shots a minute, and when the soldiers come up, we can annihilate them."

"We will try anyhow, though getting right away would be safer," said Hunston.

"That would not answer my purpose."

"We shall never be secure here any more, since we are somehow found out."

"True," replied Barboni, gloomily. "I know not how to act. This night attack must be repulsed, however."

"Things are getting desperate."

"We have Harkaway and his wife, though. Cospetto! that is very much in our favour."

"Why not kill Harkaway straight out?" asked Hunston, with a savage gleam of hatred in his basilisk eye.

"Because it answers our purpose ever so much better to keep him alive."

"I don't see it."

"Per Baccho! man, you must be blind. With Mrs. Harkaway in our power, we can always make terms for ourselves."

"Well, yes," replied Hunston, hesitatingly; "there is something in that."

"Go at once and make all preparations for the defence. We will not be surprised in the night, as they fondly hope."

"It was a narrow shave, though," said Hunston.

"Very. Bigamini has done his duty; I thank him. Come to the treasury to-morrow after the fight, my good fellow, and if either of us live, you shall be handsomely rewarded," said Barboni.

"Thank your highness," replied Bigamini, humbly, "but——"

"What?"

"I am only a spy, signor, an 'umble spy, a very humble spy, signor, and fighting ain't in my line, exactly."

"You can look on, if you like. We can do without you," replied the brigand, contemptuously.

"May I have the reward at once, signor?"

"Why?"

"You're very brave, your highness, and so is Signor Hunstoni, and you might expose yourselves and get killed, and then I shouldn't have the reward."

"Get out, you low, calculating humbug," cried Hunston "you must take your chance with the rest."

Seizing Bigamini by the shoulders, he kicked him out of the cell, and the little man tumbled on his hands and knees in the passage.

An aggrieved look was on his face as he got up.

"This isn't the first time I've been kicked and cuffed till my sit-on-it's got quite sore," he said, to himself.

He heaved a deep sigh.

"I suppose it's my lot," he added, in a tone of resignation. "I'm only a miserable Bigamini. My wife's down on me like a beaver, and I shall never, never be a happy Smiffins no more."

With this reflection on his lips, he retired to the great

hall, where he applied himself with such success to a barrel of wine, that he quickly fell into a dozy state in a corner.

The presumption was that he forgot his cares. But at intervals he muttered—

“Oh! Sarah Ann. Oh! Sarah Ann, don’t kick so ’ard, and I’ll become a happy Smiffins once more, and never be a Bigamini again.

The remainder of the day was passed very moodily by the brigand.

His dark hour was upon him.

The news brought by Bigamini had dreadfully unnerved him.

Nor was this to be wondered at.

For some time he had defied all the efforts of the English to discover his cave.

At length his hiding-place was found out, and in a few hours an attack in force would be made upon it.

He spent some time in close conversation with Hunston and Darrel.

The brigands were informed of their danger, and each looked to his arms.

Two strange-looking guns, called mitrailleuses, were loaded and supplied with a quantity of ammunition.

These were placed at the mouth of the cave.

They could fire a great quantity of bullets, and the strange machine were worked by a handle, which a brigand turned when it was required to fire them.

While walking along one of the galleries in the cave, the brigand chief was confronted by the strange lady.

To the members of the band she was *il Spirito*, or the spirit.

To Barboni, she was Lady Darrel.

Ever since the scene in the cave, when she had interfered to protect him, she had taken great care of the boy.

Fearful that he might again be ill-treated or murdered, she kept him as much by her side as she could.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, as she saw the brigand; “care is on your brow.”

“Let me pass,” he answered, sternly.

“Your hour is coming,” continued Lady Darrel. “I can see that your star is waning.”

“By Heaven, you are wrong,” answered Barboni.

“I have heard the news.”

“What of that?”

“Your cave is discovered. To-night you will be attacked.”

“Those who dare attack Barboni will suffer for their rashness.”

“Bad man,” said Lady Darrel, solemnly, “you have offended Heaven too long.”

“Heaven is too far off to take any notice of me,” answered the brigand, with a harsh laugh.

“Scoffer!” she cried, “my wrongs will be avenged.”

“Yours!” he answered. “What have you to complain of? *Per Dios!* you are lucky that I have allowed you to live.”

“I have allowed myself,” she answered.

“Why?”

“Because I love my poor weak-minded boy, who will some day be Lord Darrel, a peer of England.”

“Never!”

“I tell you he will. I am living to see him restored to his rights, and then death will be welcome.”

“You are mad,” said Barboni.

The poor woman pressed her hand to her brow.

“Sometimes I think I am,” she answered; “but I try to keep my head clear for my son’s sake.”

“Let me pass, you drivelling idiot,” said Barboni, impatiently.

“Not till you hear all I have to say.”

“Speak quickly, then.”

“You are doomed.”

“Ha, ha!”

Barboni laughed scornfully.

“Your sins have found you out,” she continued. “I know all. The hand of Providence is in this.”

“Bah! Are you talking to a child?” said the brigand, contemptuously.

“You murdered my husband,” said Lady Darrel; “and I, poor, weak thing, lived while you carried me away to this country with my child, so that you might put your own son in his place and make him a rich lord.”

“That is an old story.”

“What of that? Is it less true?”

“Get out of my way, will you?” cried Barboni.

The veins in his forehead began to swell visibly.

This was a sign that his mood was becoming dangerous.

“Your son killed a man by a cowardly blow, and was obliged to leave England,” continued Lady Darrel, “and——”

"Fool!" hissed Barboni, through his clenched teeth, "why do you irritate me with this twaddle?"

"Is it true or not?"

"I know it to be true; but what can you do?"

"I can revenge myself on you."

"Nonsense," said Barboni. "Only a confession from me would ever make your poor lunatic boy Lord Darrel."

"I will wring it from you."

"Stand aside, I say," he cried, losing all patience.

"People will recognise me," replied Lady Darrel, obstinately; "and when I tell my tale of wrong, my poor boy will take the place that your wretched son has occupied so long."

"Fool!" said Barboni, "I am in no mood for this sort of talk."

He then pushed her away violently with his hand.

"Do you dare to touch me with your vile hands?" she said.

Her eyes flashed dangerously.

Raising his fist, the brigand struck her between the eyes with all his might.

"Curse you!" he said. "Take that, you infernal wretch! You ought to have learnt common sense after all these years."

She fell heavily against the hard rock, and her eyes closed in insensibility.

Barboni strode on, and was soon lost to sight in the mazy windings of the gallery.

Scarcely had the sullen echo of his footsteps died away, when a young man emerged from a sheltered corner.

It was Luni.

He raised Lady Darrel's blood-stained face, and his tears fell fast upon the pale features.

These were dimly lit up by a lamp, which stood a little distance off, and shed its sickly light around.

"Mother, dearest mother!" said Luni.

Lady Darrel made no answer.

"Speak to me, mother," he cried.

"Alas, she is dead!" continued the unfortunate boy, as he gazed upon her pale face and motionless form.

With a deep sigh Lady Darrel opened her eyes.

Her gaze fell upon Luni.

"Is it you, my sweet one?" she said.

"Yes, mother."

"Where is Dominico?"

"Who?"

"Ah! you do not know him by that name. That was how we called Barboni when he was your father's steward."

"He is gone, mother," said Luni, "I—I saw him hit you, but I—I was afraid to say anything."

"You were right, my child," said Lady Darrel; "leave it all to me."

"You told me to do so, when you let me know that you were my mother," replied Luni.

"Yes, my precious one."

She held his hand in hers, and pressed it tenderly.

"Will the bad man be punished?" asked Luni.

"Sooner than he thinks. Help me up, my child; let me lean on you."

She rose with difficulty.

"The brute!—to hit you with his fist," said Luni.

"It is not the first time," she replied, "but——"

"What, mother?"

"It shall be the last, my dear."

She spoke with the solemn impress of an internal conviction, amounting to a revelation.

"Shall we go from here soon, mother?" asked Luni.

"Soon, my child."

"Oh! I am so pleased," returned the weak-minded Luni.

"Soon," said Lady Darrel, "these caves will be as silent as a desert."

"No one here?"

"Not a soul. The owl and the bat will flutter their wings lazily in the blood-stained spot. But, hush, I hear footsteps. Give me your hand, Luni; my eyes are weak and swollen from that coward's blow."

The young man extended his hand, and they retreated through the long galleries.

Luni knew every turning, and they were speedily lost to sight.

Night came.

The brigands were on the alert.

It was about three in the morning when the advanced guard gave the alarm.

Two shots were heard, and the brigands, who fired them, hastily retreated to the cave.

Barboni was at the head of his men, calm, cool, confident. Nothing could shake the dauntless demeanour of this man. Hunston and Darrel stood ready to fight to the death if necessary.

So did every member of the band.

These desperate fellows knew that capture was death.

Therefore, it was better to die fighting than be taken prisoners.

"Hunstoni to the right, Darrel to the left," said Barboni. "See the Gatlings worked under your own eyes."

The Gatling guns were the mitrailleuses, those terrible machines which pour in a hail of shot by the mere turning of a handle.

Steadily approached the enemy.

It had been decided that Carden should lead the Bersaglieri.

Monday was by his side.

Harvey, Mr. Mole, and the little coxswain brought up the rear.

Behind all was Hilda, disguised as an Italian peasant.

It was not considered advisable for more than one to lead the soldiers, in case of accident.

Lots had been drawn, as each was anxious to accept the dangerous duty.

The lot had fallen upon Carden.

About a hundred and twenty soldiers entered the defile leading to the brigands' cave.

This did not include four officers, Carden, and Monday.

Suddenly the black said—

"Here um be, sare. Look out. Mast' Carden; um see the brigand beasts."

As he spoke, he sank on his hands and knees.

He crawled out of the way of the soldiers, and got up against a rock.

It was lucky for him he did so.

"What for um fight?" he said to himself. "Plenty Italian mens to fight. Monday fight when wanted; now um have a quiet look-on."

Suddenly half a dozen blue lights were thrown out in front of the soldiers.

They flared up on the ground.

Everything became as light as day. A lurid glare lit up the surrounding objects.

The soldiers hesitated, and would have retreated.

In the yawning gulf before them they saw fierce men and gleaming rifle barrels.

"Courage, soldati, courage!" cried Carden.

"Forward!" said the officers.

Still the men hesitated.

"Follow me!" cried Carden, drawing his sword.

He rushed forward.

His example was irresistible.

The soldiers uttered a wild "Bravo!" and rushed into the jaws of death.

A harsh grinding noise was heard.

The mitrailleuses were at work.

Fiercely, fatally fell the iron hail upon the doomed band.

Men fell like corn before the sickle.

A deadly fire was poured in upon the wavering mass.

Sword in hand, like a hero, Carden bit the dust.

Out of all the attacking party, scarcely a handful escaped.

These, scared and breathless, joined Harvey and the others.

The blue lights died out.

Grim blackness reigned every where once more.

Nothing was heard but the groans of the dying.

"This is awful," said Harvey.

"Confound it all!" said the little coxswain. "We are betrayed."

He was about to rush forward, but Harvey restrained him.

"It's no use," said Harvey; "we're licked this time; but no matter; they are like rats in a trap. We must have them sooner or later."

"Where's Carden?"

"Killed, I fear."

Suddenly Monday's form was seen in the imperfect light.

Day was just beginning to break.

In his arms he carried a blood-stained body.

"It is Carden," said Harvey, with one look at the pale face.

Slowly the little party retreated.

Not knowing what force might be yet outside, the brigands did not dare to come into the open.

Barboni would not risk his men's lives.

Thus far he could not follow up his success.

That the troops had been cut to pieces, and the attacking party received a severe check, was enough for him

When the little party had removed out of danger, they halted.

Two of the soldiers who had escaped, were dispatched immediately, to Naples for reinforcements.

The remainder, about a dozen in number, were prepared to defend their lives bravely.

Harvey bent over the body of Carden, which was stretched out on the grass.

"How are you, old fellow?" he exclaimed.

"I've got my billet, let me die," murmured Carden, in a faint voice.

A tear fell from Harvey's eye.

"Cheer up," he exclaimed; "it may not be so bad as you expect."

"I'm riddled with balls," replied Carden.

"Monday did what um could," said the black, "um see him fall and pick him up quick."

"You can't save my life," said the dying man.

The little coxswain supported his head.

Hilda and Harvey endeavoured to stop the flow of blood.

But he was bleeding internally.

It was clear to an unprofessional eye that the days of the gallant captain of the Oxford eight were numbered.

"Ha—Harvey," he said in a fainter voice.

"What is it, old boy?"

"D—don't mess me about. I've got my ticket. Thank you all ve—very much."

"You'll live a lot yet," said Walter.

"N—no. I'm booked. We m—must all d—die some day. W—will you do me a fa—favour?"

"Of course I will."

Carden spoke with difficulty, and his breathing was hard and stertorous.

"Telegraph to England."

"Yes."

"T—to my cousin."

"What's his name?"

"Lord St. Clair—Bertie St. Clair we used to ca—call him."

"Yes."

"Tell him to co—come over here and just revenge my de—death."

"Certainly," replied Harvey.

"Ber—Ber—Bertie's in the Guards."

"Then a wire to the Guards' Club, Pall Mall, will find him."

"That's it. Oh, this pain. Sa—say I did my du—du—duty before I died," muttered the wounded man.

"You're a brick," replied Harvey.

"I wish I could die for you," exclaimed the little coxswain, sobbing like a child.

"Gi—give me your hands, you fellows," said Carden.

He held each of their hands in his own almost pulseless fingers.

"Good-bye. God bl—bless you all!" he murmured.

His voice was little above a whisper.

The end was rapidly approaching.

"Tell Jack, I—I tried to get him out, wi—will you?" he cried.

"Harkaway shall know," answered Harvey.

"How dar—dark it is. I—I can't see anyone."

Neither Harvey nor Campbell could trust themselves to speak.

The silence was only broken by their sobs.

"Oh, God! all mer—merciful," said Carden, "receive my sp—ir—it. I co—come, I co—me to Thee."

These were his last words.

So died as brave a Christian gentleman as ever breathed.

Done to death by the brigands.

Shot like a dog in a deadly ambush by the rascally thieves and cowards who held his friend Harkaway captive in their midst.

He had led a pure and spotless life.

Better that the whole bandit band should be exterminated than that he should perish.

But it was not to be.

The decrees of Providence are inscrutable.

Tom Carden was dead. Barboni lived.

CHAPTER L.

THE ESCAPE OF THE PRISONER.

IT was necessary to retreat. At daybreak, the brigands might come out of the cave, and seeing the smallness of the force left to oppose them, make a furious onslaught.

The attack had failed.

Signally failed.

The Italians made a sort of rest of their guns, and between them carried the body of Carden.

Day broke, bright and glorious.

The sun shone on the piles of ghastly corpses which blocked the entrance to the cave.

Very melancholy was the retreat.

Their progress was necessarily slow.

Harvey and Campbell were bowed down with grief.

Their friend Carden was dead.

Cut off in his prime.

Their leader, Jack Harkaway, and his amiable wife, who was beloved by all, were captives in the hands of the brigands.

They had not gone more than a couple of miles before footsteps were heard in their rear.

"Who goes there?" asked Harvey, in a loud voice.

"Friends," was the reply, in a feminine tone.

The soldiers halted, and presented their arms.

Presently two women and a man were seen approaching.

One ran forward, and threw herself into Hilda's arms.

"Emily," said Hilda.

"Yes, dear," replied Emily, "you see your friend again."

"Is it possible? How did you escape?" asked Hilda, in bewilderment.

"Ask this lady."

Emily pointed to a tall thin form, badly dressed, but yet preserving a dignified appearance.

"I am Lady Darrel," said the second woman.

"Darrel?" repeated Harvey.

"I see you know the name. Barboni, *alias* Dominico, was my poor husband's steward."

"Indeed!"

"He murdered him, and carried me and my son off, and placed his own child in his position."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Harvey.

"For years my child and I have been kept in bondage. To-night we seized our opportunity and escaped."

"Where is Jack?" asked Hilda.

"We could not get him away," replied Emily. "He is too closely guarded."

"His turn will come," said Lady Darrel.

"I did not want to go without him," exclaimed Emily; "but this good lady assured me his life was in no danger at present, and I saw that I could do him no good by staying."

"Wonders will never cease."

"If you are Lady Darrel," said Harvey, "and this young man your son, who is Gus Darrel?"

"An impostor."

"I always thought so."

"He is the brigand's son," replied Lady Darrel.

"Answer me one more question."

"Name it."

"Are Barboni and the Prince di Villanova one and the same person?"

"They are."

This reply made a great impression upon her hearers.

"Carden was right, poor fellow; we would not believe him," said Harvey.

"I wish he was alive to hear this," remarked the little coxswain.

"Barboni," said Lady Darrel, "murdered the young Prince di Villanova and took his title and estates."

"There is no end to the fellow's villiny," observed Harvey. "If you knew him as well as I do," answered her ladyship, "you would say he was a fiend in human shape."

It was great news to hear that Villanova and Barboni were the same person.

The mystery was cleared up at last.

"Barboni disguises himself by putting on a false beard," cried Lady Darrel.

"Ah!" said the coxswain, drawing a deep breath.

"He always wears a shirt of strong chain mail."

"That's why I didn't kill him when I fired," cried Walter.

"The brigands are all getting tipsy over their success,"

said her ladyship, "and we took advantage of the confusion to get away."

"Will they stay in the cave?"

"Not when they discover our escape. Let us hasten away. I have no friends, no home, but you are English, and you will shelter me?"

"My dear lady," replied Harvey, "you shall make our house your home."

"How can I thank you?" she said in a tone of deep feeling.

"Have you not rendered us the greatest service you could, in releasing our dear friend, Mrs. Harkaway?"

"Poor thing," said Lady Darrel. "I know how she must suffer."

"Forward," replied Harvey. "We will talk as we go. We are not safe till we see Naples again."

Hilda and Emily were walking arm-in-arm.

They had so much to say to one another.

Luni, looking quite a man now, supported the tottering steps of his mother.

Liberty seemed to have entirely changed him.

He was no longer the mean-looking, slinking, weedy youth he had been.

There was an air of manliness about him, and he held himself proudly, as if conscious that he was free.

"Well," said the little coxswain, "things are looking up."

"Rather," replied Harvey.

"I thought all was over, and that we were dead beat."

"So did I, but you know the old saying."

"What?"

"It's a long lane that has no turning."

Suddenly Emily said—

"Where is Mr. Carden?"

Harvey pointed gloomily to the sombre burden carried on their crossed guns by the soldiers.

"Is he ill?"

"He is dead."

"Oh," said Emily, "how grieved I am! This is dreadful. Poor, dear fellow! Jack was so fond of him."

"And he of Jack," answered Harvey, sorrowfully.

The march was resumed in silence, and everyone was occupied with his own thoughts.

At the ferry-house they found the ferryman, who knew them pretty well by this time.

He shook his head when he saw Carden, and said it was a bad business.

The body was placed in a room on the ground floor, and covered over with a cloak.

Emily and the ladies were very anxious to get home.

Harvey wanted to stop until the new arrival of soldiers came up.

This Hilda would not hear of.

"For the present," she said, "you must see us home. You can come back again, dear."

"Go along, Dick," exclaimed the coxswain. "I'll stop and see that the soldiers do their work properly."

"Very well," answered Harvey; "I'll take the ladies to Naples, and come back with a carriage for poor Carden's body."

"Don't forget to send Carden's telegram to Lord Bertie St. Clair."

"Not I. It was his dying request."

"Call on the general, and let him know all."

"Never fear."

"I should think," continued Walter, "that after this the Contessa di Malafedi ought to be arrested."

"Rather."

"I never liked that woman," remarked Emily.

"Nor I," said Hilda.

"It is clear now that, all along, she was rowing in with Barboni."

"As the Prince di Villanova, he was always at her house," replied Emily.

"He got the best part of his information from her," continued Harvey. "And I shall certainly ask for her arrest."

The ferryman embarked Hilda, Emily, Lady Darrel, Luni, Harvey, and Mr. Mole.

Monday remained with the little coxswain, who overhauled the ferryman's larder to see what there was for breakfast.

He found nothing better than goat's milk, black bread and a garlic sausage.

This was better than nothing, and being sharp set, he and Monday took the edge off their appetites.

When the ferryman returned, he had in his boat a solitary passenger.

This was a young man, well dressed, with a sharp, quick eye, and an intelligent face.

He wore no side whiskers, but had a short beard and moustache, in the American fashion.

Springing out of the boat, he approached Walter.

"Say now," he exclaimed, "you're a Britisher?"

"I hope so," replied Walter.

"You've been brigand-hunting?"

"Yes."

"I guess, from what I hear, it's turned out a bad egg?"

"We can't always be successful," said Walter, in a tone of annoyance.

"I reckon that's true for you, but don't rile up. I'm told at Naples you've been kicking and running and raising old Scratch generally for nigh on four months, and are as far off your particular brigand as you were at first."

"We've made some progress."

"Well," said the new-comer, "my name's Sam Alabaster. I'm reckoned smart where I come from, and they call me Clear-the-Track Sam in the States."

"Glad to make your acquaintance," said Walter.

"No, you ain't. Don't be too civil, or you'll bust. You don't know what to make of me, but if you'll let me be in this hunt, I'll make matters as clear as a pipe-stem."

"Thank you," replied Walter; "your countrymen are very brave."

"Don't keep on with the butter," exclaimed Clear-the-Track Sam; "it takes me right off the handle."

Walter bit his lip.

Suddenly the American exclaimed—

"What have you got there?"

He pointed to Monday.

"Why, it's a kinky-headed nigger. I can see that as easy as snuff; and it tickles me all into a heap to see a nigger so far away from hum," he added.

Walter explained that Monday was Harkaway's servant, and enlightened his new friend as to the position of affairs.

Clear-the-Track Sam handed him a flask.

"That's old rye," he said, "and the best liquor you ever drank. If it don't make your hair curl and your trousers turn up over your boots, guess you ain't no judge. Say now, don't you feel as good as new?"

The little coxswain thanked him as he gave back the flask, and pronounced the old rye whisky very excellent.

The American went on to tell him that he was travelling in Europe.

He had been twenty-four hours in Naples, and hearing that four Britishers were after the brigands, he had resolved to come and help them all he could.

Walter was glad of his assistance and of his company.

There was a fund of cheerfulness and a merry way of talking about Clear-the-Track Sam that was agreeable.

Carden's death had made Walter Campbell feel very low-spirited.

"Come, we're friends, I guess," exclaimed the American; "so you need not look as cross as a cross-cut saw. Take a drop more old rye."

"You forget that my friend Carden lies dead in there," answered Walter.

"That's true. Hullo! what's that? I'll swear I saw brigands in the bush."

Walter looked round, but could see nothing.

Monday had disappeared.

The few Italian soldiers who had escaped the massacre were all asleep, with the exception of one sentinel.

They were tired out with long marches and fatigue.

"Keep quiet a little while and you'll hear music," continued Clear-the-Track Sam.

"What is it?"

"The brigands are sloshin' about somewhere."

Drawing a revolver, he crept carefully down a small hill to where a public road ran along through two vine-clad walls.

All at once shots were heard; fierce cries and oaths rose on the morning air.

Then all was still.

Walter dashed forward to take part in the affray. But he was too late.

He met Sam Alabaster coming back with a smoking revolver.

"Guess I made the five fly," he cried.

"What's the game?" asked Walter.

"They're nimble," answered Sam. "There's a carriage upset in the road, and someone's been taken out."

"They've captured a traveller, then."

"That's so. I saw the varmints for a minute, and then they skedaddled quick."

"With the prisoner?"

"I calculate yes. They were gone in a twinkling through some hole," said Clear-the-Track Sam. "In fact, they're like Paddy's flea—when you get where they are they ain't there."

"I wish we could have saved the poor traveller, blow me tight if I don't," cried the little coxswain, in a tone of vexation.

"I did what was in me," answered Sam; "but you can't build a stone wall out of clam-shells."

Walter went on the road, and looking down saw two horses lying dead, a carriage brought to a standstill, a coachman dead, and three brigands stretched out in the dust.

"One of them's mine. I dropped him beautiful," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam; "and I was just going to spit on my hands and take a new hold, when they vamoosed wonderful."

As he spoke, a party of brigands appeared on a grassy knoll to the right.

They were dragging someone between them. Possibly this was the traveller they had taken from the carriage.

Clear-the-Track Sam unslung his rifle from his belt.

"Bet you a new hat," said he, "I drop one of the pesky beggars."

"Done. They're too far off," replied Walter.

The American knelt down, took a steady aim and fired.

The hindmost brigand fell.

"Guess you've lost," said he, in a tone of triumph.

"Bet you a hat you don't do it again," cried Walter.

A second time Sam fired.

He was unsuccessful, as the brigands had hastened their movements, and were out of range.

"I've got the best of that, though," said he.

"How so?"

"I won a *new* hat from you, and as you bet me only a hat the second time, I'll give you an *old* one, when we get back to Naples."

Walter laughed.

"Guess I'm some 'cute, eh?" asked Sam, with a wink.

They returned slowly to the ferry, and lighted their pipes.

If they had been stronger in numbers, they would have attempted to rescue the unhappy traveller.

As it was, they would only have been throwing their lives away.

"Ain't it hot just?" said Sam, mopping his face. "I'm as red as a beet. Guess I shouldn't care about cutting up Jim Crow capers in this sun."

An hour passed before Monday returned.

"Wal, old hoss, what's your report?" asked Sam.

"Um been after um brigands, sare," replied Monday.

"What good have you done?"

"Um not able do much, sare."

"Of course you weren't," said Clear-the-Track Sam, who had a great contempt for the black race.

"Monday's a cool hand, and a clever fellow," observed the little coxswain.

"Bosh!" said Sam. "You can't make a white man out of a nigger, any more than you can breed a lion from a polecat."

"Nobody wants to."

"It's against nature," continued Sam. "Can you get a peach out of a crab-apple?"

"No."

"Nor a pumpkin out of a water-melon?"

"Not much."

"Or eagles out of ducks' eggs—or chickens from ant eggs—or goslin's from gooseberries? I tell you, niggers ain't of no account."

"Let's hear what Monday has to say for himself."

The black gave the American a savage look, as if he would like to try the sharpness of his knife on him.

"Me follow um brigands, sare," he said, "and see them take um gentleman into um cave."

"Was he an Englishman?"

"Yes, sare; um know him well, and have good reason to remember um."

"Who is this English gentleman?" asked Campbell.

"It Oxford gentleman, sare—friend of Mast' Jack, but no friend of Monday, cos he once try to take away um wife."

"What is his name?"

"Sir Sydney Dawson, sare."

"By Jove! I've heard Harkaway talk of him. Didn't you try to rescue him?"

"Not me, sare," replied Monday, angrily, "me glad they take and kill him."

"That's wrong. You should not be so revengeful," said the little coxswain.

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Sam, triumphantly. "Ain't all niggers swine? Can you humanise them? No, sirree."

"I wish the soldiers would come up; we'd make a dash on the cave," said Walter, anxiously.

"Soldiers are all very well; but don't talk to me of the black trash. You show me a decent nigger, and I'll make a whistle out of a pig's tail."

Monday gave the American another evil look, and went away.

It was getting on towards evening when Harvey arrived with a strong detachment of soldiers.

General Cialdini himself accompanied the troops.

Everyone was filled with indignation at the fresh outrage committed by the brigands.

A piece of cannon was brought up from Naples, and preparations for a most serious attack on the cave were visible on all sides.

Carden's body was sent back to Naples.

The troops then moved forward.

Monday again acted as guide, and this time the advance was made with great caution.

The little coxswain was in high glee.

"We'll show the cowardly brutes what we can do," he said.

"It's like taking a nest of snakes," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam, swinging his long arms and legs about as he climbed up the hills and over the furze.

General Cialdini declared that he would hang every brigand he caught to the first tree.

Walter did not altogether approve of this.

"I think they ought to be tried first," he said.

"That brings up a great moral question—as the nigger said when he was stealing chickens—and we haven't got time to discuss it now," replied Sam.

The cave was reached just as the moon rose, and its silvery rays made the advance less dangerous.

Drawing up the cannon, it was fired twice in the direction of the mitrailleuses.

These were knocked to pieces.

"Now, my lads," said the general, "charge and show the racals what you can do!"

The soldiers uttered a hearty cheer, and rushed at the cave at the point of the bayonet.

To their astonishment, there was no one to oppose their progress.

They entered the cave, and swarmed all over it.

Not a soul did they see.

"Sold again!" said Walter.

"The varmints have sloped!" said Sam.

General Cialdini was most profoundly vexed.

Barboni had evacuated the cave.

The brigands could not have been long gone, as their lamps were still burning and the embers of a fire smouldered in a corner.

All at once Harvey's attention was attracted by a groan.

He looked under a piece of matting, and started back in horror.

An Englishman was lying on his back on the floor.

He had been stabbed in a dozen places.

A pool of blood had stained the rocky floor.

But with at most excited Harvey's horror and indignation was the fact that the captive's hand had been cut off and forced into his mouth.

Instantly Harvey drew out the mutilated member.

"Are you dead? Speak, if you have any life left in you," he said.

An almost inaudible sound came from the lips of the man.

Bending down, Harvey put his ear to his blood-stained mouth.

"Name, Sir Sidney Dawson, Oxford; murdered by brigands. Just gone."

This was what he heard.

"Take care," continued the sufferer. "Heard say slow match—blow up cave—kill soldiers."

Seizing the dying man in his arms, Harvey ran to the entrance.

"Take care!" he shouted in Italian; "the brigands have mined the cave. Beware of an explosion!"

This warning sent them flying.

The soldiers rushed helter-skelter from the cave, and gained the open air.

Harvey sought a place of safety, and laid down Sir Sydney Dawson.

He placed his hand on his heart.

There was no movement.

His soul had fled, but ere he died he had been able to save the others from a terrible catastrophe.

It was a melancholy sight to behold the elegant dandy of Oxford.

The refined and fastidious Sir Sydney Dawson.

Exquisite of the High Street, and breaker of ladies' hearts in every capital in Europe.

He was carefully dressed, and there was a lavender glove on the remaining hand.

Alas, for human vanity!

Poor Sir Sydney!

His had been a short life and a merry one.

While these thoughts were running through the little coxswain's mind, a fearful noise was heard.

The brigands had set a time-fuse.

Barboni himself had attached it to the magazine before he left.

His spies had warned him of the approach of the soldiers.

He hoped to blow them all up in the air.

A flash of lurid flame was followed by an awful roar and a tremendous upheaving of the solid rock.

Never would the bandits' cave disclose the secrets of their former inmates.

The rock was torn and rent, and it fell back a mass of picturesque but shapeless ruins.

It was magnificent, almost sublime.

"Thank God for this escape," arose involuntarily to many a lip.

"That's what I call a tall blow-up," said Clear-the-Track Sam.

The general bivouacked his men until the morning, and each one camped as well as he could.

Next day an exploration of the ruins was made.

No trace of the brigands could be found.

The castle was visited.

Here, there only reigned a dead silence.

Not even a servant was left in Castel Inferno.

Barboni had utterly and completely cleared out. Where he had gone was a matter of conjecture.

Seeing that the game was up, it was supposed he had retreated to the mountains.

His disguise as Prince di Villanova was known.

There was no safety for him and his men except in flight.

Whether he had killed Harkaway or taken him with him, it was impossible to say.

Foiled again, the whole party of pursuers had to return to Naples.

Monday alone remained.

He expressed his determination of hunting about till he found his master.

The faithful black would not give up the chase.

In Naples the opinion was that Barboni had received a severe check.

The Contessa di Malafedi was thrown into prison to await her trial as an accomplice of the brigands.

Lady Darrel and Luni were received and cared for by Emily and Hilda.

Clear-the-Track Sam was a constant visitor at Harvey's.

The Englishmen were only waiting for an opportunity for recommencing operations.

Until they received some news of Barboni's whereabouts, however, they could do nothing.

Troops took possession of Castel Inferno and made it a strong garrison.

Exploring parties went out every day.

But weeks glided by, and no news came of Barboni.

Emily hugged her grief to her sorrowing heart, and prayed to Heaven for Jack to be restored to her.

It was a sore trial.

But she bore it bravely, like the courageous girl she was.

Harvey fretted and fumed.

The little coxswain used bad language, and cleaned his pistols.

Mr. Mole declared that if he could only see Barboni, he would eat him.

"If you did," replied Sam Alabaster, "I guess he'd disagree with you, and you'd look kinder blue about the gills, and something like own brother to a frozen turnip."

"My young and impulsive friend," answered Mr. Mole, with a smile of mild reproof, "you don't know me."

"Yes, I do," said Sam; "you're one of those confounded Britishers, who think they can do anything."

This roused Mr. Mole's ire.

"Why, you thin, ill-made whipper-snapper," he answered, "if I thought you meant what you said, I'd wipe out this insult."

"Don't get calling names. If I'm thin, what are you?"

"Look at the troubles I've gone through," said Mole, pathetically.

"What's that to do with your looks! You can't afford to die. You're one of those walking, poverty-stricken skeletons who go about to save the expense of a funeral."

Mr. Mole turned haughtily on his heel, and went away. He was no match for the American.

Tom Carden and Sir Sydney Dawson were buried on the same day in the Protestant cemetery.

All the English in Naples and several Italians followed these two victims of the brigands.

Then the thoughts of our little party turned to Monday. When would he return?

What news would he bring with him?

"If he doesn't come back soon," said Walter, "I shall start out after him."

"And I too," replied Harvey. "I can't stand being here idle."

Still the days passed by and no news came.

Suspense seemed more unendurable than the exciting events that had lately taken place.

CHAPTER LI.

DEATH OF THE WITCH

WHEN Monday resolved to stop and spy about in search of his beloved master, he was rather puzzled where to go.

He wandered about in his wild state.

His clothes were again discarded and hidden.

Once more he was a savage.

On the evening of the day the troops returned to Naples, he was lurking about the ferry.

It was his opinion that the ferryman was in the pay of Barboni.

The Prince of Villanova, if he was the chief, had always crossed over in the ferry-boat.

So it was not a bad idea of the black's to hang about in that neighbourhood.

Nor did he go unrewarded for his pains.

He saw a little man come up and talk to Andrea, which was the ferryman's name.

"Is all safe?" asked Andrea.

"Safe as we can make it," was the reply.

"Ha!" muttered Monday, "that um Bigamy chap."

He was right.

The speaker was Bigamini, prince of spies.

"Where goest thou?" asked Andrea.

"I shall be heard of at the sybil's cave for some time to come. That's my headquarters. Come, ferry me over."

Bigamini jumped into the boat and Monday heard no more.

He could not make much out of the conversation.

But he determined to watch Bigamini.

It was better than doing nothing.

Swimming leisurely across the river, he walked towards the cave.

Bigamini arrived some time before him.

The witch was sitting before a fire, over which, on a tripod, hung a saucepan, in which some mess of food was cooking.

The snakes were gliding about as usual.

The wolf sat on its haunches, and sniffed at the savoury stew, of which he expected to get his share.

Looking up as Bigamini entered, the old woman uttered a grunt of recognition.

"Good-evening, mother," said Bigamini.

"Get thee gone?" replied the witch, angrily.

"What for?"

"The stars warn me of evil through thee."

"Perhaps the stars tell lies, perhaps they don't," answered Bigamini.

"Who sent you here?"

"The master."

"For what purpose?" queried the sybil.

"I've got to keep watch here. Things have gone badly with us."

"Ha! is it so? I warned him to be careful. When Mars is in conjunction with Mercury, and Sirius hides his face, there is danger in the air."

She rocked herself to and fro for some time.

Suddenly she raised her head, and her sharp, ferrety eyes sought his face.

"What has happened?" she demanded.

"The cave is discovered, the prisoners have escaped, a !

everyone knows that Villanova and Barboni are one and the same person."

"That is bad—very bad."

"We have blown up the cave, deserted the castle, and taken to the mountains."

"Bad—bad," murmured the witch, shaking her head gravely.

"You cursed old croaker," said Bigamini, "are you going to keep me here without offering me any thing to eat and drink?"

"I have nothing."

"What's in the pot?" he said, lifting the lid, and adding with an appreciative sniff—"stewed kid, I'll swear; that's good enough for me."

"You're no welcome guest here," said the witch.

"The master sent me here, so make no bones over it. I'm a fixture. Get out some brandy, and then I'll have a dish of that goat stew."

With a groan of discontent, the sybil obeyed him.

She went to a locker in the rock, and drew out a bottle.

Bigamini fancied that he saw, by the glare of the lamp, aided by the flickering of the fire, a quantity of gold coins.

"Got money, has she?" he murmured, while an evil look took possession of his face.

His hand involuntarily sought his belt, as if he wished to assure himself that his knife was there.

"Tell me the news again," said the witch, as she gave him the spirit, which he drank raw.

"You deaf old beetle," replied Bigamini, "can't you hear?"

"Not so well as I used."

"The woman they call Il Spirito, and the young man Luni, have escaped."

"Yes."

"The cave's blown up, and the castle deserted."

"Well?"

"Barboni has gone to the hills with his men."

"Bad, bad—all bad," sighed the old woman.

"You seem to take a deal of interest in the chief," said Bigamini, curiously.

"I have good reason."

"Why?"

"Because I am his mother," was the reply.

"Well, may I be a happy Smiffins!" said Bigamini, drawing a long breath.

"Yes, he is my son, and I love him dearly, though, *santis-sima Virgine!* he has never treated me too well."

"Why should he, you croaking old hag?" asked Bigamini.

He helped himself to some more brandy.

"I did not make him what he is," said the witch.

"He's a brigand—I'm a brigand—we're all brigands, and where are they who wouldn't be, that's what I want to know?" cried Bigamini.

"Ah, it's a bad life. You're all common thieves, though I once thought I should never have to call my son that," replied the old woman.

"You must be a duffer if you abuse your own flesh and blood," exclaimed Bigamini.

"I speak the truth. He was well brought up. We had a good position once in Verona."

"Pity you didn't keep it."

"Dominico broke his father's heart, and robbing me, reduced me to beggary."

"But he's given you a lot since, I daresay," said Bigamini, with an eager glance.

"Yes; I can't complain."

"What did he give you? Gold?"

"Yes."

"And precious stones?"

"Yes."

"Have you got them now?"

The little man's eyes glistened dangerously as he asked the question.

"That's no business of yours," replied the witch.

She lifted the lid of the pot and stirred up the mess with a wooden spoon.

"Come along, mother," said Bigamini, in his best Italian, "give us some of that grub."

"Don't interrupt me," answered the witch, extending her skinny hands over the caldron.

"I'm hungry."

"None of this will you have."

"Why?"

"I'm working my spells."

"Bother your spells, you old fool," said Bigamini.

The sybil rose, and seizing one of the snakes by the neck, threw it into the pot.

"By this sign and by this token,
Never shall my spell be broken."

she sang in a weird voice.

"I say, don't," exclaimed Bigamini; "I can't stomach snakes."

"Silence!"

"I won't be silent. Is that what you usually make your stews of? If so, I won't dine with you often if I can help it."

"Let owlets flutter and bats fly,
My Barboni shall not die,"

continued the witch.

The wolf bared his gums and opened his jaws as if he saw mischief was brewing and was ready to take his own part.

"What's up, mother?" said Bigamini.

She made him no answer.

"Have you gone off your chump?" he added, in English.

She threw another snake into the caldron, and the wretched thing writhed and twisted.

Its head protruded over the edge, and she beat it back with the spoon.

Again the witch sang—

"He may suffer much and long,
May be weak instead of strong;
But by the stars that light the sky,
My Barboni shall not die."

"That's more than you know," said Bigamini.

"Hush!" she answered; "it is the voice of fate."

"Voice of humbug. Give us some grub. Get out and let me come."

He pushed the old woman rudely aside, and peered into the seething caldron.

The snakes were dead now, and looked like eels in a stew.

"What a jolly old fool to go and spoil a good supper," said Bigamini, in a tone of disgust.

"Stand aside," cried the witch.

"I shan't."

"You'll break the spell."

"Blow your spells!"

She seized him by the arm to drag him back.

"Look here, old gal; you ain't Sarah Ann, and I shall have to give you a topper, if you come it too strong," said Bigamini.

His attitude was threatening.

He thought of the gold he had seen in the cupboard in the rock.

It might be his.

What did it matter that the blear-eyed old crone was the mother of Barboni?

No one would see him commit the deed.

He could swear that the troops had killed her on their way back to Naples.

She was suspected of harbouring brigands.

What more likely than that the Italians should put her to death, thinking her an accomplice of Barboni?

Unable to resist the temptation, Bigamini drew his knife, and as she again attempted to push him back, he struck her.

"Oh, Holy Virgin!" she cried, and sank to the ground.

Bigamini threw himself upon her, and buried his knife deep in her heart.

Once, twice, thrice he repeated the death-dealing stroke.

The witch uttered some incoherent sounds.

Rising to his feet, Bigamini gazed stolidly at the corpse.

The wolf came up and licked his mistress's blood.

"She's dead," said Bigamini, with a ghastly smile. "Now for the treasure."

He went to the cupboard in the rock.

To his delight he beheld a goodly pile of gold coin mingled with jewels.

"This will make me rich," he muttered. "Let it stay here for the present; and now to dispose of the body."

He did not see a pair of keen eyes looking at him through the entrance to the cave.

Monday was peering through the imperfect light, which, however, was sufficient to enable the black to see what had taken place.

And what was it he saw? Murder!

CHAPTER LII.

A STRANGE BEDFELLOW.

WHEN Bigamini was satisfied that the witch was dead, he dragged the body for some distance into the interior of the cave.

Pitching her down a hole, he bestowed a curse upon her by way of funeral sermon.

Then he returned to the caldron.

The sybil had spoilt the mess by throwing the snakes in.

He couldn't eat snakes, so he took up the pot and emptied its contents outside the cave.

Monday prudently retired when he saw him coming.

Washing the pot out at the spring, Bigamini put some fresh water in and some more onions.

"I'll go and see if I can't steal a fowl or two," he said, aloud, "at some farm-house. Blessed if I ain't hungry enough to eat a horse."

Stirring up the fire, and putting on some more logs, he walked off.

Scarcely had he gone before Monday walked in.

"What um Bigamini doing here?" he said to himself.

The wolf bared his gums at the black, but the latter, not being afraid of him, caught him by the neck.

Holding him in his arms, he took him outside.

Here was the savoury stew that the snakes had spoilt.

The wolf appreciated this, and fell to with an appetite.

Speedily goat's meat and even snakes disappeared down his capacious swallow.

When he had finished his supper, he came up, and rubbed his head against Monday.

He seemed to say—

"You're not a bad sort, and I'm much obliged to you for this good feed."

"Poor wolf, nice wolf," said Monday, patting him.

Monday had seen the dead body of the witch, and witnessed the carrying away of it by Bigamini.

He guessed that a murder had taken place, though what Bigamini's object could be he was unable to conjecture.

Presently he would come back with the fowls.

An accomplished thief and ruffian like Bigamini would not have much difficulty in finding a hen-roost.

And when he had found it, his scruples of conscience would not prevent him from wringing the necks of some roosters.

He would come home and put them in the pot.

This would make a splendid supper.

Monday was hungry, and he determined to cut Bigamini out if he could.

The witch had been accustomed to sleep in a little bed placed in a hole cut out of the rock.

Sheets she disdained as luxuries.

But she had blankets and a counterpane.

Monday fancied that Bigamini would sleep in her bed.

Picking up a piece of rope, he called the wolf to him.

"Poor wolf, come to um Monday ; um good old wolf," he said.

The animal, being accustomed to human society, and grateful for the stew, came.

Animals are some thing like men.

The surest road to their hearts is through their stomachs.

Seizing the wolf by the neck again, the black tied his fore-legs together.

Then he did the same with his hind ones.

The wolf resented this treatment, and bit his finger.

"Bite um Monday, you beast," he said ; "I cut um liver out."

The wolf seemed to understand the threat, and, having some respect for his liver, lay quiet on his back.

Monday sucked his finger till the pain went away.

Then he lighted a lamp, and took stock of the cave.

There were several cupboards in the rock.

One was a larder.

Another a gold cupboard ; and in a third were some articles that women wear.

Monday seized upon a dress and a cap, which he bore off in triumph.

The dress was of a light-coloured material, and in it he put the wolf.

On his head he fastened the cap.

Taking the unresisting animal in his arms, he carried him to the bed, and placed him in it. The wolf lay quite still.

Monday pulled the clothes over him, and hid himself up in a dark part of the cave.

Soon Bigamini returned with four fat fowls.

These he plucked, cleaned, and cast into the pot.

Having done this, he rubbed his hands with glee at the idea of the nice supper he would have.

Being rather tired, he thought he would have a little rest.

Looking round, he saw the witch's bed.

Taking up the lamp, he approached it.

"I shall have a pipe until the grub's ready," he said, "and I may as well rest, for I've been on the tramp all day."

Setting down the lamp on a ledge of rock, which was meant to receive it, he approached the bed.

There was a curious noise as he came near.

The wolf had seen him kill his mistress, and he did not like Bigamini.

"What on earth's that?" gasped Bigamini.

He began to tremble.

Dismissing his fears, he advanced again and pulled down the clothes.

With a cry of horror he let them fall.

The witch had come to life again, or it was her ghost in the bed.

Filled with superstitious fears, he retreated outside the cave.

The wolf uttered snarl after snarl, and Bigamini made sure it was a spirit.

"I'll not come in again to-night," he said; "I'll sleep in the open. No ghosts for me. I was a fool to touch the old hag. I might have known she'd raise spirits."

So he went outside and sat on a stone smoking his pipe, and casting frightened looks at the mouth of the cave.

Meanwhile the stewing fowls went on capitally.

The smell was most appetising.

Monday licked his lips.

He had had nothing to eat all day, and he thought he could polish off some of that poultry.

Thinking that the ghost had settled Bigamini, he stole from his place of concealment.

In a cupboard he found a wooden platter and a knife and fork, as well as some salt.

He took off the top of the pot, and plunged the fork into a fowl.

It was done.

Pulling it out, he placed it on the platter and began to eat it.

In a surprisingly short time it was gone.

Monday had enough of the savage left in him to do without bread.

In went the fork a second time, and out came fowl number two.

This went the way of the first.

His appetite not yet having lost its edge, he began to tackle a third.

Bigamini, meanwhile, was sitting outside the door, and he could smell the savoury steam of onions and stewed fowls.

"It's uncommon good," he said. "I'll go in and chance the ghost."

Entering the cave, he started back in amazement.

There was somebody eating his supper.

Again he cautiously advanced.

It could not be a ghost, because ghosts don't eat.

"I say, you fellow there, what are you doing?" he cried.

It was Monday's turn to start now.

"Um Bigamini," he muttered; "make haste now."

He had just finished the third fowl, and he dipped into the pot for the fourth start.

Bigamini sprang forward.

"No, I'm darned if you do," he said; "you've had enough."

Monday jumped up, holding the fowl on the fork in one hand, and his knife in the other.

"Um want to be stuck like um stuck um witch?" asked Monday, his eyes gleaming.

Bigamini fell back alarmed.

"Is it you, Mr. Monday?" he said. "What have you done with your togs?"

"I'm on the war-path," replied Monday. "Keep off."

"How did you come here?"

"Come for shelter; find um good supper and eat him," answered Monday, with a grin.

Bigamini groaned.

"Give us a bit," he said. "I stole the fowls and cooked 'em."

"Um welcome to um soup ; find some black bread in um cupboard, daresay," said Monday.

"Well, you are a hog," said Bigamini.

"What four fowls to hungry man?"

"What? Have you eaten the lot, and I sitting outside?"

"Um all gone," replied Monday, cracking the last leg between his powerful teeth.

"Well, I'm blowed; I didn't think it was in you, Mr. Monday."

"It all in me now," said Monday, grinning again.

Bigamini gulped down his annoyance.

"I'll put up with the soup," he said. "I'm only a miserable Bigamini, and I suppose soup's good enough for me."

"It's too good."

"Ah, you wouldn't have said so when I was a happy Smiffins; but no matter, a time will come when the weary shall be at rest. But I say, sir—Mr. Monday, sir."

"What um say?"

"Have you seen any thing since you've been here?" asked Bigamini, bending forward anxiously and nervously.

"Yes."

"What?"

"Um see um ghost in um bed. You killed um witch, I see that, and now um witch come to haunt um cave."

"You saw me? You won't split on me, will you?—not that she was worth any thing, but I shouldn't like it to come out."

"Treat me well, Mist' Bigamini, and me say nothing, no try to stab um. Monday carry um knife. See!"

The black produced his weapon, and flashed it in Bigamini's eyes.

Coward as he was, he shook all over with fear.

"Mr. Monday," he said humbly, "how could you suspect me of thinking of such a thing? I respect you as a friend, and honour you for coming out on the war-path, as you say, after your master."

"Eat um soup," said Monday, curtly.

"Thank you. I'm only a miserable Bigamini, Mr. Monday, and really this condescension from one of your superior race is more than I can bear."

"I go to sleep now I eat fowls," said Monday.

"Worthy sir, may your slumbers be refreshing."

Monday threw himself down on a mat in the shadow.

He pretended to sleep.

In reality, he kept one eye open, and his hand was on his knife.

Lucky for him was it that he did so.

Bigamini dipped some black bread into the soup, and ate it, grumbling all the while.

"Curse that nigger!" he muttered; "the brute's done me out of my fowl supper. I'll square him up presently."

When he had to some extent satisfied his hunger, he looked round.

Monday was apparently sleeping.

Creeping up on his hands and knees, with a knife between his teeth, Bigamini determined to send him to join the witch.

He was almost upon him, and had raised his hand to strike.

Monday had been watching him.

With a snake-like bound, he threw himself on the assassin.

His hard, bony fingers held him down, and Bigamini was completely floored.

"What um do?" cried Monday, angrily.

"Oh! Mr. Monday. Oh, sir," gasped Bigamini, "don't, please, hold my throat so tight."

"What um come to do, then?"

"I only wanted to put something under your head for a pillow, sir."

"Lie," replied Monday.

"It's a fact; on my soul, it is. Let me go, sir. Mr. Monday, you're choking me."

"It um good job."

"I must appeal to the well-known humanity and universally-admitted generosity of the black or colored race, sir."

"You try kill me as you kill poor witch."

"No, sir. Not me, sir. No, sir. Really, Mr. Monday, you are mistaken."

"Um never make mistake."

"Worthy sir," continued Bigamini, in a whining voice, "spare the life of a wretched being. Is it not enough that I am an outcast from my country?"

"Tell you what um do," said Monday.

"What, sir?"

"Um give you a chance."

"Blessed angels wait upon your footsteps for evermore, sir," replied Bigamini, gratefully.

"You shall sleep in um witch's bed."

Bigamini's repentance changed again to despair.

"Holy Moses!" he gasped.

"Um not like that?" asked Monday, with a grin.

"I'd rather die. 'There's a ghost in that bed."

Monday raised his knife.

"Die, then," he said.

The fear of death again attacked the wretched Bigamini.

"I'll do it, sir," he cried, eagerly. "Don't strike, Mr. Monday; I'll do it."

"Come on, then," said Monday.

He raised him up and led him to the bed.

Pulling the clothes down a little way, he pushed him in, but, at the same time, he cut the cord which bound the wolf's fore paws.

The wolf couldn't get out of bed; because his hind legs were still tied.

But he could use his teeth and his claws, nevertheless.

Bigamini lay still, trembling.

He could feel something warm near him.

What it could be but the ghost of the poor, helpless woman he had murdered, he could not imagine.

Cowards with weak minds will believe any thing.

He really fancied he was in bed with a spirit.

"If um move, um get this, mind that," cried Monday, showing his knife.

Bigamini cowered down under the blankets.

The wolf was never a very amiable animal, and recent events had not tended to improve his temper.

He began to use his claws, and scratched his bedfellow about the back.

"Lie still, granny," said Bigamini, in a persuasive voice.

"Oh! you hurt. That's my—oh! Lord, do be quiet."

The wolf put down his nightcapped head, and began to bite.

"I say," roared Bigamini; "turn it up."

"What's um row?" asked Monday.

"The sperrit of the witch is on to me."

"It um fancy."

"No, Mr. Monday, it ain't fancy. Oh, oh!"

"Tell um it is."

"It can't be, when I'm having bits taken out of me."

"Lie still, and hold um noise," said Monday.

"I can't. Oh, Lord!"

Bigamini could bear the torture no longer.

The wolf was punishing him severely.

He jumped out of bed, and dodging past Monday, ran out into the darkness.

"Um little Bigamy too quick for me," said Monday. "Never mind; um had a bad scare."

Going to the bed, he released the wolf, and went out of the cave to look for the tailor.

Bigamini was walking along the road, uttering moans and rubbing himself.

Monday kept him well in view.

Nothing would have induced Bigamini to go back to the cave that night.

He had been too much frightened.

His intention was to join an advanced post of the brigands in the hills, and stay with them a day or two.

He meant to tell Barboni that he had never been to the cave at all, because the soldiers were about it.

The sybil had said she was Barboni's mother.

If the brigand chief found she was dead, and knew Bigamini had been there, he would blame him for the murder.

But Bigamini intended to put the blame of her disappearance on the soldiers.

This was his artfulness.

If ever there was a cunning demon, it was the brigand's spy.

He knew where the gold was in the cave, though, and he meant to have that some day.

It was nearly morning before he reached the outposts of the brigands, who were encamped at the foot of the mountains.

He was thoroughly exhausted.

Giving the password, he was allowed to enter the encampment.

Gus Darrel was in command.

A short distance higher up the hills was another detachment, commanded by Hunston.

While higher again, in a position admirably adapted for defence, was Barboni, with the bulk of his followers.

Darrel's duty was to make raids on the farms, and procure food, as well as to keep a good lookout.

When Monday saw Bigamini join the advanced post of the brigands, he was satisfied.

"Got um now," he muttered.

Incredible as it may seem, though the black had had no sleep for eighteen hours, and had been on the tramp most of the time, he felt no fatigue.

In fact, he was as fresh as paint.

Instead of sleeping, he cut off across country, and made his way back to Naples.

CHAPTER LIII.

"YOU CAN'T KILL ALL THE LITTLE MEN, YOU KNOW!"

WHEN day broke, Monday was trudging along the road to Naples.

In front of him he saw some men approaching.

As they drew nearer, he made out that they were soldiers.

At their head, on horseback, were an Italian officer and an Englishman.

Monday went on at a fast pace.

"Halt!" cried the commanding officer, as he beheld a naked black man approaching.

"Mast' Walter," said Monday, "don't fire, sare; it am Monday."

The Englishman was Walter Campbell, and the quick eyes of the black had discovered him before he was recognized in his turn.

The little coxswain rode up eagerly.

"Is it you, Monday?" he said.

"Yes, sare."

"Have you found out any thing?"

"Found um brigands, sare."

"That's good news. How did you manage it?"

"Followed um Bigamy, sare. He bad man; spy of um brigands."

"By Jove!" said Walter, "I always thought that fellow was a bad lot."

"Where Mast' Harvey, Mist' Mole, and that Yanke man, sare?"

"They're on the look out somewhere," replied Walter. "But I have come out on special business."

"What that, sare?"

"You know Miss Lily Cockles."

"Do Monday know his own head, sare?"

"Well, she has disappeared and left a note saying she is going to marry the Prince di Villanova in the Castel Inferno to-day."

"The prince is Barboni, sare," exclaimed Monday.

"Of course. We know that now."

"What um do?"

"I don't mind telling you I love Miss Lily, and I mean to stop this business if I can."

"Quite right, sare. Monday in love once. Sir Sydney Dawson—him dead now—try take her 'way. Monday stop that."

"Are your brigands far off?" asked the little coxswain, thoughtfully.

"Not so very far, sare."

"I've a good mind to have a cut in at them as I go by on my way to the castle."

"That not um bad idea," said Monday, approvingly.

"I can't make out why Miss Lily Cockles should be so foolish; but this brigand thief has established an influence over her somehow."

"Who you think command the brigands where I see Big-
aray go, sare?"

"Can't guess."

"Lord Darrel, sare. Me see him."

"Why, he's the man who killed Lily Cockles' brother."

"That him, sare."

"He's the brigand's son really. He's Barboni's own son, you know," answered Walter; "we've heard that from Lady Darrel and the poor boy they called Luni."

"We go and settle him, sare," replied Monday.

"But you look tired," replied the little coxswain.

"Monday got pluck, sare. Much to be done yet; Mast Jack not free; Barboni alive."

"Come along then. Lead me to the brigands. A brush with the scoundrels will give me an appetite for breakfast," answered Walter.

Monday accordingly turned round.

The little coxswain spoke to the officer in command, and the whole party followed the black, who led them straight to the first encampment of the brigands.

Scouts were thrown out by the latter, and they, following their orders, retired without firing a shot.

Darrel saw the enemy coming and would have retreated.

But Monday led the handful of Bersaglieri up to the spot where they were encamped, and they came with a rush.

The conflict was fierce.

Brigands and soldiers were pretty nearly equal in numbers.

The little coxswain singled out Darrel.

"Hi! you, sir—you fellow who call yourself Lord Darrel," he exclaimed, "come and have a tussle with me."

Darrel came forward with a pistol.

He fired it point blank at Walter Campbell, but fortunately for him it missed fire.

The little coxswain rushed at him.

They were separated from the rest of the combatants, owing to the brigands being driven up the hill by the soldiers.

As a rule brigands don't fight well when there is no plunder in view.

Barboni was not with them to animate them by his presence.

They had been surprised, which was another thing against them.

Seeing himself cut off from his men, Gus Darrel fought as hard as he could.

He drew his sword and lunged at his opponent, who was only armed with a pistol and a dagger.

The pistol did him good service, however.

His first shot broke Darrel's sword arm.

The weapon fell from his hand.

On dashed the little coxswain with his dagger and plunged it into his breast.

"You killed Lieutenant Cockles," he said.

"And I'd kill you if I could," replied Darrel, sinking back.

"I dare say you would," answered the little coxswain, dealing him another blow. "But you can't kill all the little men, you know."

Darrel sank back with a groan.

"I'm not very big," continued Walter. "Still, I've been big enough to settle you."

"Let me die in peace," said Darrel.

"Oh, I'll help you, if that's all," answered Walter, who gave him another stab in the region of the heart.

Suddenly Monday's voice was heard.

"Do um duck, sare?"

The warning came only just in time.

Walter ducked his head, and a bullet, fired by a fugitive brigand, hissed over him.

"Now I'll see to your father," said Walter, calmly.

Darrel turned up the whites of his eyes, and then became rigid.

He was dead.

Lieutenant Cockles was avenged.

Having lost two-thirds of their number, the brigands scampered off as well as they could, and left the field to the soldiers.

The little coxswain was delighted at having killed the brigand's son.

Lily Cockles would be charmed to hear that the murderer of her brother had perished.

She was not revengeful, but she had her feelings, which prompted her to hate the man who killed her brother.

Time passed.

Walter Campbell could not stop to bury the dead, and the body of Gus Darrel remained stark and ghastly in the sunshine.

"Now for the castle," said the little coxswain. "Lily must be saved at all hazards."

Several soldiers had fallen in the struggle.

But about thirty remained, and these, shouldering their rifles, began their march to Castel Inferno.

Monday went ahead as scout.

Walter and the officer in command rode at the head of the detachment, which, formed into fours, brought up the rear in a long, straggling line.

The river Volturno was crossed at a point where it was fordable, and the water did not come up higher than the waists of the men.

On the other side of the river a cheery voice accosted them.

"Hullo!" it said, "by the 'tarnal! here you are; butting your heads against brigands, I guess, as usual."

It was Clear-the-Track Sam, on horseback, and with him was Harvey.

"We couldn't rest, after we heard you'd started," said Harvey

"I'm glad we've met," replied Walter. "Because I expect we've got sharp work before us."

"Have you been fighting?" asked Harvey.

"Guess he's well blooded," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam.

"Monday guided us to a brigand outpost, commanded by Darrel," was the answer.

"And you fought?"

"Rather? I killed Darrel with my own hand."

"Bravo, young one!" cried Harvey, delightedly.

"I told him he couldn't kill all the little men, and just to see how he liked it, I killed him," replied the little coxswain, with a smile of satisfaction.

"That will balance matters. Darrel for Carden."

"You found my letter, I suppose?" asked Walter.

"Yes," replied Harvey; "we came in late, after hunting about all day. But tired though we were, we did not hesitate to start at once when we found you had gone after Miss Cockles."

"Barboni has established some strange influence over her," observed Walter, musingly.

"He has, and it is the more singular since Lady Darrel explained to her what a wicked rascal he is, and that Villanova and Barboni without the beard are the same person."

Riding side by side, they continued to chat as they went forward.

"How is Mole?" asked Walter.

"Very bad," answered Harvey.

"What's wrong with him?"

"Such a lark; since Monday's been gone, we had to hire an English butler and put in the pantry."

"Yes."

"It appears the man we've got, whose name is Thomas, is as fond of crooking his elbow as Mole himself."

"There's a nice pair, then."

"They got drunk last night, and Mole got into Thomas's bed. In the night they woke up."

"I say, sir," said Thomas, "there's some fellow in my bed."

"So there is in mine," replied Mole.

"I'm going to kick my fellow out," said Thomas.

"So am I going to kick mine out," answered Mole.

"Whereupon they both began kicking like Old Harry,

until both of them lay sprawling on the floor, and Mole fell on his head, which, not being so hard as the boards, was considerably knocked about."

The little coxswain laughed heartily at this story.

"Your Mister Mole is a tall drinker," remarked Sam.

"He can drink a little," replied Harvey.

"He wouldn't blink, I reckon, if you gave him some old rye that would take the hair off a man's head, and make his inside feel as if he'd swallowed a half-pint of darning needles?"

"Not he."

"I took his cask away this morning, because the doctor said he was to be kept quiet," continued Clear-the-Track Sam.

"Didn't he go on?"

"You should have seen him swell and bloat like a mad porcupine," said Clear-the-Track Sam.

"I can fancy I see him," said Harvey.

"He looked at me hard, and says he—'Mr. Sam, I can generally use my tongue in defence of my rights, but you have committed so gross an outrage on me by taking away my cask that I am silent, because if I was to swear for an hour, I couldn't do justice to the subject.'"

The young men laughed again at this.

"Any news of Jack?" asked Harvey, after a pause.

"No; Monday has made an important discovery, though," answered Walter.

"What's that?"

"He has proved, beyond a doubt, that the little contemptible scoundrel they call Bigamini is a spy in the employ of the brigands."

"Poor Carden always thought so."

"I expect Barboni derived much of his information from him and the Contessa di Malafedi."

"No doubt of it," answered Harvey.

"That young Harkaway's a cute little chap," remarked Clear-the-Track Sam.

"Yes; he's sharp enough," answered Walter.

"He's got my name pat as butter. What do you think he said yesterday?"

"Can't tell."

"Says he, 'Mr. Clear-the-Track, if you men don't fetch back my pa, I shall have to go after these brigands myself.'"

"'You're not old enough,' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'I'm not up to your age, but I'm a Boy of England, you know, and that goes for something in fighting foreigners.'"

"That boy resembles his father all over," said Harvey.

"Guess he's clever enough to find the tail of a rainbow," replied Sam. "Anybody got any liquor?"

"Not a drop," said Harvey.

"That's bad. I feel like wetting my gills, if I can get a chance. What with the dust and the sun, I'm pretty nigh baked."

"Perhaps, when we reach the castle, we shall find something in the cellar," said Harvey.

"I can't understand what Miss Cockles meant by saying on the slip of paper she left that she has gone to the castle," said Walter.

"Nor I."

"The Italian troops garrison it."

"Very true," said Harvey.

"I remember one thing," cried Walter.

"What is that?"

"In the woods is an old chapel. Perhaps he will have a priest there, and be married."

"Not unlikely."

The little coxswain gnashed his teeth with rage and vexation.

"Cheer up, old fellow, and hope for the best," said Harvey. "We may be in time yet."

"Forward," cried the little coxswain, impatiently.

Leaving word with the officer to press on with the men, they urged their horses forward.

Gaining the top of a hill, they beheld Castel Inferno in the valley beneath, standing out boldly in the sunshine.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE.

BARBONI, with an audacity peculiar to him, had determined upon making Lily Cockles his wife.

He had a deep design in doing so.

Lily was a wealthy heiress.

If he could secure her hand, he could disband his men, and fly to some island in the Mediterranean, where he would be safe from pursuit.

Here, loving and beloved, he could spend the remainder of his existence in peace and calmness.

As the Prince di Villanova, Naples was closed to him.

As Barboni, he was a haunted man, with a price on his head.

In the mountains he could prolong his existence, rob travellers, and still be the king of the brigands.

This life had enjoyment for him.

Yet an existence of love with Lily was very tempting to him.

Accordingly he assumed a disguise, and went into Naples. Lily was in the garden.

He saw her, and exercising the power of his superior will, he commanded the weak and trembling girl to be his wife.

We know that she obeyed.

She disappeared.

The only clue she left her friends was a piece of paper, on which she wrote that she was going to Castel Inferno to marry the man whom she still called the Prince di Villanova.

We have already stated that a small company of soldiers had been placed in the castle as a garrison.

But, with his habitual daring, the brigand did not care for them.

They would be drinking, smoking, and card-playing, as is the custom of Continental soldiers.

As Walter had conjectured, he meant to make Lily his wife in the old chapel.

A priest from a neighbouring village had, in return for a

handsome present, easily consented to perform the ceremony.

Outside Naples the brigand had a horse in waiting.

The half-fainting, timid girl allowed herself to be conducted to this spot.

The brigand Barboni's magnetic influence completely controlled her.

Lily Cockles suffered herself to be lifted lightly on the horse.

Then away like the wind.

Away to the mountains—the bandit's bride.

Regrets were useless, for she was far away from all who could help.

She had quitted her friends in rash haste.

What could she do, poor little bird, writhing under the fascination of the snake?

The brigand halted at the sybil's cave.

Brutalised as he was, he respected the old woman, who had spoken truly when she said that she was his mother.

He expected to meet Bigamini here.

It was early morning.

Bigamini, pursued and watched by Monday, had been gone some hours.

Lily had been travelling all night, and stood in need of rest.

"Come, my darling," said the brigand, in tender accents.

She leant on his arm, and they entered the cave.

He was surprised at not seeing any thing of the witch.

Perhaps she had stepped out to gather sticks.

Going to the cupboard, he took out some food and placed it before Lily.

She could not eat.

Then he placed her on the bed, and waving his hands over her face, threw her into a strong magnetic slumber.

"Sleep," said he, in a commanding voice.

Her eyes closed immediately, and Lily sank into a soft slumber.

Barboni had discovered that he was a mesmerist.

This was the secret of his power over the weak and gentle girl.

The wolf came up to him and licked his hands, making a whining noise.

"What is it?" asked Barboni.

The wolf's whining increased.

He took hold of the corner of the brigand's cloak with his teeth, and tried to drag him up the cave.

"Diavolo!" cried Barboni, "there is something wrong."

Seizing a lamp, he went with the wolf.

The animal stopped in front of the hole in which Bigamini had cast the dead body.

Barboni stooped down, and saw something huddled up in a heap.

He stretched out his hand.

It came in contact with cold human flesh.

"Santissima Virgine!" he cried, starting back with horror.

A terrible suspicion crossed the mind of this man of blood.

Nervous and agitated, he again stretched out his arm, and exerting all his strength, he drew up the body.

One glance at its pale and haggard face was enough.

A fierce cry welled up from the bottom of his heart.

Falling on his knees he exclaimed—

"Mia madre!"

"My mother!"

The sight of his murdered parent unmanned him more than he fancied he could be moved.

Man of cast-iron nerve and adamantine heart as he was, he trembled.

A tear started to his eye, and fell upon the corpse.

Then his mood changed.

His face became convulsed with passion.

The veins on his forehead, swollen almost to bursting, stood out like cords.

Rising to his feet, he cried in a terrible voice—

"Cursed be the hand that shed this blood! May his limbs wither and rot! may all the fiends torture him in fire everlasting! Let him be accursed!—accursed!—accursed!"

Reverently he placed the body on a bed of leaves.

One kiss he imprinted on the wrinkled brow.

This was his eternal farewell.

Then he closed the eyes that looked up at him with such a wild and horrible expression.

Retiring to the front of the cave, he sat bowed down, with his face hidden in his hands.

Memories of the past thronged his teeming brain.

He saw himself as he had been, and as he was now.

Saw himself an innocent child, and a man grown old in every species of crime.

Very, very bitter were those memories of the past.

Evil days were coming upon him.

His mother was dead, through the act of some cowardly assassin.

This was blow number one.

Soon he was to know that his son, who had so long usurped the title of Darrel, had ceased to live.

That would be blow number two.

Misfortunes never come singly; they come in whole battalions.

At length the sun rode high in the heavens, and its rays, penetrating the sombre recesses of the cavern, warned Barboni that it was time to be up and doing.

Going back to the sibyl's corpse he took it up, and carried it to a deep well, down which he let it fall.

On the top he piled pieces of rock.

This was the witch's burial.

Quitting his repulsive task, he woke up Lily.

"Come, sweet one," he said, "time is flying."

"I am ready," she answered, with a weary sigh.

They mounted again, rode to the Volturmo, crossed in the ferry, and gained the lonely chapel in the wood.

Here the village priest was, by arrangement, awaiting their coming.

"Father," said Barboni, "I have brought my bride."

"I am prepared," answered the priest.

"Let the ceremonies of the church proceed," said Barboni, impatiently: "and, cospetto! cut short your mummeries."

They were alone in the chapel.

Not a single follower had the brigand with him.

Lily stood by his side at the altar, looking more like one in a trance than a living being who fully understood what she was doing.

Mesmerism, when long exerted, has the effect of weakening the victim.

Lily had been under its influence for some time.

So great was the power that Barboni exercised over her that she had no will of her own.

Very lovely she looked.

Pale, slender, drooping, she resembled the flower whose name she bore.

The priest began to read the services of the Roman Catholic Church.

He had not gone on long before the brigand started.

His acute sense of hearing stood him in good stead.

"Hush!" he exclaimed, holding up his hand.

A few seconds passed.

"Per Dios!" he cried in Italian, "the cursed Inglesi are upon us."

He was right.

The door of the chapel was thrust open.

"Here they are," cried Walter Campbell. "Tally ho!"

Barboni levelled a pistol.

The cap snapped.

"Would you?" exclaimed the little coxswain.

He fired in his turn; but his aim being wild, on account of his being afraid of hitting Lily, his bullet struck the priest, who fell to the ground mortally wounded.

The holy man clutched his prayer-book tightly with one hand, and held a crucifix to his bleeding breast with the other.

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart," he muttered.

He breathed heavily, but still clutched the crucifix tightly, and struggled to raise it to his livid lips.

"Holy Father," he gasped, "receive my sinful spirit, and pardon all bad men. Holy Virgin! this pain. Pity me. I'ardon. I come."

Harvey and Clear-the-Track Sam had by this time dismounted from their horses.

The little coxswain had hurried on before them, carried along by love and excitement.

They entered the chapel, led on by Walter's cries.

Barboni saw the priest fall, and gazed at Lily.

What could he do?

The odds against him were tremendous.

"Death to the brigand!" shouted the little coxswain, again levelling his pistol.

Again he missed his mark.

"Look hyar," said Sam, "clear the track; this won't do. Your popgun's as blunt as a pump-handle. Clear the track, I say."

"Dash it!" replied Walter.

"You're acting just like a girl going to get married, and are, for all the world, as soft as a pumpkin. Clear the track."

A ball from the brigand whizzed past his head.

"This won't do, stranger, nohow," continued Clear-the-Track Sam.

He advanced a step.

He took a good aim, and the brigand's arm fell powerless by his side.

"Guess he's got gosh that journey," he cried delightedly. "Now then, clear the track."

Barboni cast a glance of hatred at his enemies.

He took one loving look at Lily, who had fallen, fainting to the ground, and disappeared through a door only known to himself.

"Hurrah! he's bolted," cried Walter.

"Guess he takes lead with him, and I cleared the track," said Sam.

"Never mind him. See to Miss Cockles," said Harvey.

This advice was not necessary, for the little coxswain had already rushed forward and was supporting the senseless girl in his arms.

"Ain't we to organize no pursoot?" asked Sam.

"He may have followers at hand," answered Harvey.

"That's right."

"Better guard the chapel."

"Bust his biler," said Clear-the-Track in a tone of disgust.

"I expected to see him hanging on a sour apple tree by noon."

"You peppered him," said Harvey.

"I did so; and I'm dreadful glad to believe it. I shall have a drink over this, and it'll be a case of 'How come you so?'"

"I think we've licked," said Harvey, who looked out of the door.

"No one about?"

"I can't see anybody."

"No brigands?"

"Not the shadow of one."

"Then I reckon this cabinet council is over," said Sam; "and if there's no objection raised I'll put on a mild smoke."

He lighted a cigar.

"I'm wild there ain't to be no pursoot," he continued.

"Have a look round if you like," replied Harvey.

"I reckon I could strike a bee line for that brigand."

"Not you. He's too fly."

"Not for me. I'm tee-totally down on brigands."

"Cut along then, and see what you can do," said Harvey.

"Stop a bit; didn't you say something about a castle?"

"Yes."

"And there being a chance of liquoring up?"

"I did."

"Then I guess this child's a fixture. The sand on this continent is kinder onaccountable."

"Well, it is dry," remarked Harvey.

"I reckon I've eat to-day night upon a bushel, and if that won't make a man's inwards want rinsing out, tell me what will, and I'll say I'm not thirsty."

Harvey laughed.

The little coxswain had, by his tender care, brought Lily to herself again.

She seemed to recover her presence of mind now that she was removed from the pernicious mesmeric influence of Barboni.

In a few words Walter told her that the brigand had gone away with his arm broken.

She shuddered as she saw the dead body of the unhappy priest.

"That was my fault," said Walter; "but my hand shook so confoundedly with riding all day, and the fear of hitting you, that it was quite an accident."

"Is he really gone?" asked Lily.

"Who—Barboni?"

"Yes."

"Cleared right out," answered Walter.

Looking up in his face, she smiled through her tears.

"I have been very foolish," she said.

"Wall," said Clear-the-Track, "that's a fact."

"It was not my fault though," she continued.

"How's that?"

"That man seemed to govern me against my will. You are all kind friends; you will forgive me."

"Quick as time," said Sam.

"We have no right to blame you, Miss Cockles," said Walter, "but we shall be very pleased if you think we have done right in coming after you and saving you from a thief and a miscreant."

"Of course I am grateful; only——"

She shuddered visibly.

"Only keep him away from me in future, or I know not what may happen."

"He's a man that'll bear watchin'," said Clear-the-Track. "He's got hyena eyes."

"Yes, yes; it is his eyes," cried Lily, eagerly.

"Wall, miss, I guess I'm tickled to death a'most to see you again," said Sam; "and now let's get out of this sink of sin, and make tracks for the castle."

The proposition was a good one.

Harvey went first.

The little coxswain followed, with Lily on his arm.

Sam brought up the rear.

They had not far to go to reach the castle.

Here the soldiers received them kindly.

Their own detachment, which they had headed considerably in their impatience, came up soon after.

Scouring parties were sent out after the wounded brigand.

Lunch was provided for the English, and Sam quenched his uncomfortable thirst in a bottle of right good wine.

Lily recovered her strength, and soon became herself again.

In the cool of the evening the party returned to Naples.

The scouring parties came in without having found any trace of the enemy.

Monday accompanied Harvey and his friends as far as the river.

"Um go no further, sare," he said.

"Why not?" asked Harvey.

"Never live in um town again till um find Mast' Jack."

"But your wife Ada wants to see you. Come home for a day or two."

"Me love my wife very much, sare, but um owe a duty to Mast' Jack."

"As you like."

"Tell Ada, sare, um quite well, and hope be back soon."

"Trust me," said Harvey.

He wrung the faithful fellow's hand, and the next moment Monday was threading his way through the bush, to prosecute some idea which had occurred to his savage instinct.

CHAPTER LV.

THE BLACK'S DEVOTION.

STANDING at the door of the chapel, Monday had seen Barboni making his escape.

He had rushed round to the other side, without discovering any trace of the wounded brigand.

Knowing that the whole place was honeycombed with subterranean passages, he imagined that he had got away by some hole-and-corner way with which he was acquainted.

An examination of the brigands' cave had shewn that there was a communication between Castel Inferno and the cavern.

A gallery cut in the solid rock.

Barboni had used this when Hunston's telegram had summoned him to fight Carden.

But though Monday was foiled for the moment, he did not despair.

Where was Barboni so likely to go as to the mountains?

Though Darrel's outpost had been routed, and himself slain, there was no reason why the brigands should change their headquarters.

They would certainly remain where they were until their master's return.

Acting upon this idea, Monday hastened to the spot where Darrel had been surprised.

The corpse lay where it had fallen.

Bodies of soldiers and brigands were also spread about, which also showed that Hunston was afraid to descend into the plains to bury them, and anxiously awaited the chief's return.

Hiding himself behind a bush not far from the body of Darrel, Monday waited.

The sun was already sinking in the heavens.

A cool refreshing breeze came up from the sea, and agitated the sultry atmosphere.

For more than an hour, Monday waited.

He crouched like a panther waiting for his prey.

Neither hunger nor thirst had any effect upon the wiry savage.

He had a duty to perform.

Jack Harkaway, his master, whom he loved better than life itself—more than his affectionate little white wife, was in captivity.

The one idea in his mind was to rescue his master.

Suddenly a shrill whistle sounded on the air.

Monday instantly recognized it, as that peculiar signal by which Barboni intimated his presence to his friends.

There was no answer.

The brigand raised his voice.

“Vi saluta Barboni.”

This was the password.

His tone was no longer harsh and commanding.

His broken arm had bled freely, during the weary journey from the old chapel to the base of the mountains.

He was faint and weak.

A tempest had been raging in his mind.

He was suffering exquisite pain.

“Vi saluta Barboni!” he cried again, in a louder voice.

Only the echoes of the everlasting hills mocked him.

Surprised at this portentous silence, he looked carefully around him.

His eye fell upon dead bodies.

Upon Bersaglieri, in their gay uniforms, lying side by side with brigands in their picturesque costumes.

“Ha!” he cried, “there has been a struggle, and my men are driven back.

He took a step in advance.

“What is this?” he exclaimed.

Then came up a fierce wail, which went to heaven.

The man’s sins were finding him out.

“My son—my son! Oh, God, my son!” he cried raising his unwounded hand on high.

Again he fell on his knees, as he had fallen in the sybil’s cave, when he mourned his mother.

It was not his mother now.

It was his only son, whose death he had to deplore.

He had hoped much from Gus Darrel, and to see him cut off in his prime was a sore and heavy blow.

All seemed lost.

“My son—my son!” he wailed, in his strong agony.

His grief tore his already lacerated heart.

Now he saw how sweet were the paths of virtue.

How inexpressibly bitter the broad and pleasant road which leadeth to destruction.

A stealthy step came behind him.

A long arm was outstretched.

His throat was seized from behind, and he was thrown on his back.

He lay there gasping, with the cruel, suffocating pressure forcing his eyeballs to start out of his head.

"Mercy! mercy!" he cried.

It was the first time the proud and haughty, so long successful, Barboni had ever uttered those humiliating words.

He had thought, in the pride of his heart, that he would never have occasion to do so.

But his sin had found him out.

This was a day of expiation.

Monday bent over him, and took his arms away.

First his pistols, then his dagger.

"You only got one arm," said the black. "Now you get up. You no more good than um dried snake."

Barboni rose slowly to his feet.

In the presence of an enemy he became brave again.

It was the torture of the mind that made him weak. So he said—

"I am your prisoner."

"That am so," replied Monday.

"If I mistake not, you are Mr. Harkaway's black servant?"

"Um friend of Mast' Jack," replied Monday.

"Ah, I see. You perceive that my left arm is broken by a pistol shot. Were it not so, I should not have surrendered so easily to you."

"Cut um yarn short," replied Monday.

"Of course you desire the liberation of your master?" said Barboni.

Monday nodded his head.

"Will you exchange me for him?"

"How it am got to be done?" asked Monday, dubiously.

"Take this ring higher up the mountain, and give it to Signor Hunstoni, with an order in my handwriting for the release of Mr. Harkaway."

"Perhaps fall into um trap."

"No," said Barboni; "I am fallen. I have met with re-

verses and suffered—how keenly none but myself know; but I have not fallen so low as to be disobeyed by my own men."

"Give um order and um ring," replied Monday.

"You will go?"

"Make you fast first."

"Do what you like with me," replied Barboni. "I know Mr. Harkaway to be a gentleman, and he will keep the bargain I have made with you, as it is my life for his."

Monday led him to a tree in a secluded spot, and with a couple of belts he took from the bodies of dead soldiers, he made him fast.

But before he was tied up, Barboni took out his tablets, and wrote the order.

"To Signor Hunstoni, in command of outpost No. 2. On sight of my signet ring I order you to at once and unconditionally deliver up Mr. Harkaway, our prisoner, alive and well, to bearer, without following him or organising any pursuit.
BARBONI."

Barboni gave him directions which way to go.

Gallantly Monday climbed the hills for about an hour.

He saw a fire burning and brigands lying round it.

Hunston was sitting on a large stone, smoking a pipe.

This was outpost No. 2.

Monday glided past the sentries, and appeared in the centre of the circle.

"Mist' Hunston," he said, as he rose up.

"What the deuce—Monday!" cried Hunston.

"Don't shoot, sare. Me come as 'bassador from Barboni.

Hunston lowered the pistol he had raised.

"What's the meaning of this?" he said.

"The brigands had sprung to their feet and grasped their rifles.

They saw the black ghost again, and knew not what to make of him.

Monday held out the letter and the ring.

Hunston read the one and looked at the other.

"By Jove!" he said; "what has happened?"

"Barboni um prisoner; Mist' Darrel dead."

"I knew Darrel was shot and our advance guard driven in. Who captured the chief?"

"Um not at liberty to say, sare."

"Well," said Hunston, "this order is straight enough. I hate Harkaway like poison, but orders must be obeyed."

"If not, Barboni dies, sare."

"Wait here, and I will send for Harkaway."

Hunston spoke to a brigand, who on receiving his instructions, started off at a brisk pace higher up the mountains.

"Well, Monday," said Hunston, "it's a long time since we met."

"Yes, sare; knew you in Limbi."

"Of course you did, you confounded piece of ebony."

"Been doing well, sare?"

"Jogging along," answered Hunston.

"Best turn honest man, sare."

"It's easier to preach about it than to do it," replied Hunston. "I think I shall cut this life."

"Cut it, sare?"

"Yes, I'm about tired of it, and I've got some money. America would suit me."

"They've got gallows in um United States, sare," said Monday grinning.

"Don't you cheek me," exclaimed Hunston.

"No, sare; no cheek."

"It brings back old times to see you, Monday," said Hunston, after a pause.

"This is something like Pisang and Limbi, sare."

"Well, yes; it's a rough and tumble, unsatisfactory sort of life, and I tell you I'm sick of it."

"You and I not enemies, Mist' Hunston?"

"No. You're Harkaway's servant, and that's all I've got against you."

"Give um Monday some drink, sare."

"If you'll tell me what's happened I will."

"Can't tell all, sare."

"Has Barboni pulled that marriage off?"

"No, sare; it stopped."

"Who by?"

"Mast' Harvey, little coxswain, and a 'Merican chap um not like cos he run down um niggers."

"Oh, have they got some one to take Carden's place?"

"Yes, sare; Mist' Clear-the-Track."

"That's a rum name."

"Him rum chap."

"Where is Barboni?" asked Hunston.

"That um secret, sare."

"Did he show fight?"

"Him left arm broken, sare."

"It's all his own fault. I told him he ought to take men with him," said Hunston; "but he's so jolly pig-headed; he won't be persuaded. Are you hungry as well as thirsty?"

"Um could break um crust, sare?"

"That's about all you'll get, for we're jolly badly off for rations to-day."

Hunston ordered some refreshment to be placed before Monday, who was glad to get any thing.

He had eaten nothing since the previous night when he devoured Bigamini's fowls.

When he had finished eating, Hunston spoke to him again.

"The luck's taken a turn," he remarked.

"Yes, sare."

"Lady Darrel and the real Lord Darrel, I hear, are with you, and you've got Emily back, and now Harkaway's going."

"It's 'bout time," said Monday.

"Barboni wounded, too, our cave discovered, and the whole gaff blown. Who'd have thought it three weeks ago?"

He heaved a sigh of disgust.

A slight noise announced the approach of some one.

It was Jack Harkaway.

He was pale and thin, but he cast a glance of defiance at Hunston.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"Now," replied Hunston, "aren't you a cantankerous son of a sea-cook?"

"Why? If I am a prisoner, you must not insult me. They've taken my chains off, and I can kick."

"Mast' Jack!" exclaimed Monday.

"Ha!" cried Jack, "you a prisoner, too? Poor fellow, I'm sorry for this."

"No, sare, I'm not um prisoner."

"What then?"

"I'm 'bassador."

Turning to Hunston, Jack said—

"Will you kindly explain this mystery?"

"You're free to go when you like with your black friend."

Jack smiled incredulously.

"Be a man, Hunston," he exclaimed. "Don't chaff me while I am in my present position."

"I'll be hanged if I'm chaffing."

"But——"

"Look at this."

Jack eagerly read the order by the light of the fire.

His face brightened.

"Thank you," he said.

"I don't know how it's been worked, Harkaway, but you've got your ticket of leave," exclaimed Hunston; "and as you know me as well as I know you, I'll speak the truth and shame the devil, and say I'm thundering sorry for it."

"Hunston, old fellow," said Jack, "I've no cause to love you, but I don't hate you as you do me."

"That's not my fault."

"No; you've tried to make me a bitter enemy."

"Haven't you given me cause?"

"I hope not; and look here."

"Well?"

"If you like to cut this gang, I'll forget the past. I'll let bygones be bygones, and give you another start."

"Keep your start for yourself," said Hunston, surlily.

"All right I've made you the offer, and if we meet again when you're going to the scaffold, it won't be my fault, and I shall have nothing to upbraid myself with."

"Leave me to take my own course."

"I certainly shall after what you've said."

"Don't I know my game better than you can teach me?"

"Perhaps. Good-bye," said Jack.

"Go to——"

Hunston's last words were lost upon Jack, who had stepped away with Monday.

They descended the side of the hill rapidly, and did not attempt to speak until they reached the plain.

Then Monday told Jack all that had happened.

"By Jove!" he said, "we've been making history. Carden shot—Darrel dead—Bigamini a spy—Barboni captured and wounded—his marriage with Lily frustrated—Emily safe—Lady Darrel and Luni with us—what a budget of news!"

"Yes, sare."

"We must set Barboni at liberty," Jack continued.

"Why not shoot um brigand sare?" asked Monday, with a savage glance of the eye.

"Monday!" exclaimed Jack, reprovingly.

"In Limbi, um eat him, sare."

"I daresay, but you are not in your native country, and I thought you had forgotten all those things."

"Mast' Jack do as him like," replied Monday, humbly.

"I'm ashamed of you," said Jack.

"Mean no harm, sare but think, Mast' Jack."

"Think what?"

"P'raps never get Barboni again."

"You forget that he arranged that he should be liberated by you if his men set me free; and brigand, murderer, thief, and blackguard though he is, that is no excuse for my breaking faith with him."

"You promise nothing."

"You promised it in my name. Say no more. I would rather lose my life than do a dirty trick."

Jack spoke decisively.

Monday was silenced.

They came to where Barboni was bound to the tree, and Jack instantly set him free.

"We meet on equal terms at last," said Jack.

"I have nothing to say to you, Mr. Harkaway," replied the brigand. "My wound is stiff and painful. I am weak from loss of blood, and my mind is disturbed by the disasters which have befallen me."

"I don't want to talk to you," said Jack, curtly.

"Nor I to you."

"Think yourself lucky I keep faith with you."

"Oh," said Barboni, blandly, "I knew you were a gentleman, Mr. Harkaway."

"Which you are not."

"That is an insult," exclaimed Barboni, firing up. "Before twenty-four hours have passed over your head, you shall repent that speech, sir."

"Bosh!"

"You'll think of my words in a short time. Cospetto! you don't know me yet," said Barboni.

"Lead the way, Monday," said Jack; "the country is strange to me."

"Come on, sare."

Jack and Monday quickly disappeared, while the brigand, slowly and with laborious footsteps, climbed the mountain to reach his men.

He was faint with hunger and weak from loss of blood.

Much of the fire had been taken out of him.

Still there was some of the old spirit in him when the threat against Jack was delivered.

He had some deadly purpose in view.

Beaten, baffled, foiled, and wounded as he was, Barboni was not a man to be trifled with.

If he said a thing, he meant it.

There was danger ahead.

But Jack was so pleased at recovering his liberty, and at learning all the good news, that he thought he could afford to laugh at the idle threats of a defeated brigand.

CHAPTER LVI.

JACK'S RETURN.

A VERY pleasant little party was assembled in the drawing-room of the house in the Strada di Toledo.

Emily was recounting her adventures among the brigands.

Lady Darrel and Luni, who was much stronger and better, made remarks from time to time to explain the mysteries of the cave, and its connection with Castel Inferno.

Only one cloud remained to be dissipated.

This was the absence, in captivity, of Jack.

They did not guess that Harkaway was at that moment on his way back to Naples, accompanied by the faithful Monday.

Jack's absence notwithstanding, all confessed that they had great cause for congratulation.

So much had happened in so short a time.

The brigands' power had been crippled, if not destroyed.

Mr. Mole was very talkative.

"It is my opinion," he said, "that those brigands are contemptible fellows."

"They've shown themselves any thing but that," replied Harvey.

"Tackle them boldly," cried Mr. Mole, "on the nettle principle."

"It's all very well to talk," said the little coxswain, contemptuously.

His opinion of Mr. Mole was not very high.

"What does a nettle do if you touch it lightly?" cried Mole.

"Stings."

"Of course, it stings you for your pains; but grasp it boldly, like a man of mettle, and it soft as silk remains. Now, you've been pottering about, and coquetting with your brigand."

"We shall have him in a corner before long."

"Yes," said a tiny voice at Emily's knee, "me give it him hot some these days."

"Hallo! young Jack, what do you know about it?" asked Harvey.

The little fellow drew himself up proudly, and shouldered a pop-gun.

"Give me real shoot gun," he answered, "and me kill all the brigands and get my papa back."

"Bravo, youngster!" exclaimed the little coxswain. "You're made of the right stuff."

A tear rose to Emily's eye.

She caught up her darling, and straining him to her breast, kissed him tenderly.

"My precious one," she murmured. "God forbid you should ever have any thing to do with those dreadful men."

"The fact is," said Mr. Mole, "you can not put old heads on to young shoulders."

"Who wants to?" asked Harvey.

"No or no. The significance of my remark lies in this way. Before I came amongst you nothing was done. Since my arrival the brigand has had to turn tail."

"I guess you're tarnation clever," said Clear-the Track.

"Thank you for the compliment."

"You think it was all through you that Barboni's bust up?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Mole with a complacent smile.

"Why don't you get Harkaway out clear?"

"I have done the best I can in putting Monday on the scent. You have all of you failed, so, like a skilful general, I try a new card and dispatch the black."

"A fat lot I expect he'll do," said the coxswain.

"Don't condemn him just yet. So far my judgment has been good, for up to the present time Monday has been a decided success," replied Mole.

"I wish he may go all right," observed Harvey. "But I have my doubts."

"Don't be afraid about Harkaway," said Mole.

"Why not?"

"That man has got as many lives as a cat. They'll never hurt him. I shouldn't wonder if he were to walk in at any moment."

There was an incredulous laugh at this.

"No such luck," replied Harvey, shaking his head dismally.

As he spoke the door opened, and Monday rushed in, looking wild and savage.

His only attire was a piece of linen round his loins.

The ladies uttered a shriek, and young Jack clung to his mother.

"Here him come," said Monday, delightedly. "We have um race from bottom of um street, and I lick Mast' Jack."

"Not by much, you beggar," cried Jack, who made his appearance in the doorway.

"By Jove, it's Jack!" cried Harvey, astonished.

Harkaway ran to his wife, and, clasping her in his arms, kissed her over and over again.

"This is too much happiness," replied Emily, over whose eyes came a dizzy film.

Monday did a dance on the hearthrug, and Mr. Mole was so excited that he got up, and, putting his arm around the black, danced with him.

They waltzed round and round, till Mole, getting giddy, fell up against a flower-stand, and tumbled down, dragging Monday with him.

A mass of geraniums and fuschias overwhelmed them.

"Um not live on um geraniums," said Monday, spluttering, with his mouth full of bloom.

"You're better off than me," replied Mole. "I've only got the earth."

They extricated themselves as well as they could.

Then began such a handshaking as Jack had never had before.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried Harvey. "Cut along, Monday, and bring up some wine."

"A very desirable suggestion," said Mr. Mole, still spitting out earth; "I heartily approve of it. We must drink Harkaway's health."

"With all the honours," remarked Walter Campbell.

Clear-the-Track Sam went up to Jack, who had just finished kissing his child, and had handed him back to Emily, who was sitting on the sofa, half-fainting with delight, supported by Hilda.

"Guess you're Boss Harkaway?" said Sam.

"That's my name," replied Jack.

"Glad to know you. Stars and Stripes! I reckon you're some clever to get away from those brigands."

"I have to thank Monday for that."

"Thank the black?"

"Yes."

"Do tell," said Clear-the-Track, in surprise.

Jack related how Monday had fallen upon Barboni while he was lamenting over the body of Darrel, and so effected an exchange.

"Well," said Sam, "I guess I'm full against niggers, but if this polished skunk ain't a cut above coloured gentlemen in usual, I'll never touch old rye again."

He turned to Monday.

"Give us your fin, old fish," he added.

But Monday was gone to embrace his wife, Ada, and bring up the wine Harvey had ordered.

"Are you a friend of Mr. Harvey's?" inquired Jack.

"I reckon you aren't far out. My name's Clear-the-Track Sam, and I calculate I'm smart enough to bottle up brigands."

Jack laughed, and Harvey explained how they had made the young American's acquaintance.

Lady Darrel, Luni, and Lily Cockles next came in for a share of our hero's attention.

He had a great deal to hear.

The forced marriage, the escape of Lady Darrel, Emily, and Luni had been recounted hastily to him by Monday, as well as the death of Carden.

But he now received the details.

He was very sorry for Carden, and disgusted at the cruel death of Sir Sydney Dawson.

His hatred for Barboni increased.

Monday came up, dressed, with half a dozen of champagne.

"That's your sort," said Sam. "I'm death on this nigger now.

"I'll put my money on a big black man,
Dooda, dooda, day."

"Are you fond of singing?" asked Mr. Mole.

"Nothing wonderful," replied Sam.

"Did you ever hear that

"'Yankee Doodle came to town upon a little pony,
Stuck a feather in his cap, and called it macaroni?'"

"I guess you want to insult me," said Sam.

"By no means, Mr.—what's your name?" replied Mole.

"Clear-the-Track is my name."

"Ah! to be sure. I had forgotten it, though I knew it was some outlandish, over-the-water nickname."

"Look here, you'd better watch it."

"Who labelled you?" asked Mr. Mole.

"Why, you mean cuss," said Sam, "you low-minded swill-tub, guess you ain't fit to black the shoes of a Bowery boy. You Long Island loafer, you sand-crab, you're worse than a copperhead."

"My dear, sir," said Mr. Mole, shrinking under the torrent of abuse.

"You everlasting ghost, you dead rabbit, you——"

"My worthy friend."

"You lushing son of a down-east kinky-headed nigger."

"This is too much."

"Go and lie like a lizard in the sun, you smoke-dried old bootjack," concluded Sam.

Mr. Mole sank back in his chair, with his mouth wide open.

"Well, I never did," he gasped.

"And may I be eternally spifflicated if I ever did see such a long slab of humbug in all Europe."

"I was never called a smoke-dried old bootjack before," said Mr. Mole.

"Will you own up like a man that you're whipped, you thundering——"

"Don't say another word. I have a power of words, but I'm not a match for you."

Mr. Mole held up his hand to deprecate any further attack.

"I guess you ain't in it with me," said Sam, in a tone of contempt. "Why, you ain't worth a red cent."

"Don't."

"I own up that I think more of a buck nigger than I do of you. That's so. You snivelling brother to a trapped skunk, don't you say any thing to this 'coon again. I conclude I'm some pumpkins when you're in the garden."

Harvey came up with a glass of champagne.

"Dry up," he said, "and drink this glass of sparkling."

"He was down on me like a beaver, first," replied Sam.

"What's the odds? He's old enough to be your father."

"That's no reason why I should have my head cheeked off."

"Harvey," said Mr. Mole, "I never had such a torrent of abuse before."

"Why, you cantankerous old grizzly, haven't you had enough?" asked Sam.

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Mole; "don't, for heaven's sake begin again."

"Shut up, then; close immediately, if not sooner."

"Take some wine, sir?" said Harvey.

"Ah! wine," said Mole, brightening, "good idea. I will take a glass, and many thanks. The abuse has made me thirsty, and this—this person——"

"Would you?" interrupted Sam, threateningly.

"My dear Mr. Clear-the-Track, nothing was further from my intentions than to utter a disrespectful word."

"That's right. I guess I'm cock of this hen-roost, and the biggest fish in this swim."

Nothing more was said.

Jack's health was drunk with musical honours, and then Monday's, for the black deserved all the praise that he received.

A pleasanter evening had never been passed since their arrival in Naples.

Young Jack showed his intelligence by asking a variety of questions about the brigands.

"Show me Barboni," he said; "will you, pa?"

"When he's hanged you shall see him," said Jack.

"What's that, pa?"

"Having a hempen collar on and dancing on nothing."

Young Jack was puzzled.

It took old Jack nearly ten minutes to explain that mystery of civilisation called hanging.

"I'd cut his head off," said young Jack, with a wise look: "that better than breaking his neck?"

"We'll see about it, young man," answered Jack, patting his infant prodigy on the head.

CHAPTER LVII.

A SURPRISE FOR MR. MOLE.

THE next day Jack sat out in the garden, and had a "good steady think," as he called it.

Barboni had been roughly handled.

Blow upon blow had fallen upon him.

He was somewhere in the mountains, for though he would not stay in the same place where Monday had liberated his master, he would have to hide in the fastnesses.

To descend into the plains would invite capture by the soldiers.

His band was weakened. It was reported that several men had deserted.

He had lost Darrel, one of his best officers.

So, altogether, the brigand chief was in a bad way.

Still he seemed as far off as ever from capture.

Think as he would, and as hard as he could, Jack couldn't decide upon any plan.

Emily begged and entreated him, with tears in her eyes, to go back to England and rejoin his regiment.

She stole up to him while he was sitting under a shady tree.

"Jack, dear," she said.

"Is it you, my pet?" he replied. "You crept up like a little mouse."

"So I am a little mouse," she answered, and you're a great fierce cat."

"Why?"

"You want to pounce upon brigands. I do so wish you'd give it up."

"I can't, darling."

"Not even to please me?"

"I'll do any thing to please my dear little wife," he replied. "But you ask me to do some thing which would turn the laugh against me and all the English here."

"I can't see it," said Emily, shaking her head.

"That's funny, when it's clear."

"Explain it to me, Jack."

"Shall I?"

"Please. I'm only a silly little woman, and you're so

brave and so clever, and it seems to be folly to stay here after all we have gone through."

"You can go back when you like with the youngster."

"Oh, no, I never could leave you. My anxiety on your account would kill me."

"Pretty, affectionate little darling," said Jack, smoothing her hair, as she knelt on the grass by his side.

"Tell me, Jack, why you can't give up this life?" she inquired.

"Simply because I have pledged my word to bring Barboni to justice, and my honour is at stake. Must I not keep my word?"

"I should not like you to break it."

"Spoken like my own little Emily," he said approvingly.

"But Jack, dear?"

"What?"

"I have a new fear. Suppose Barboni were to steal our child?"

Jack laughed.

"I should like to catch him trying it on," he replied. "Why, the scoundrel, _aren't_ show the tip of his nose within miles of Naples now."

"Not disguised, even?" she asked earnestly.

"I don't think so. At all events, there is no danger of that."

"It makes me happy to hear you say so."

"Barboni will act on the defensive in future, and he'll be very thankful if we let him alone," said Jack.

"Lady Darrel tells me that you advise her to go to England with Luni to prosecute her claim to the estate," said Emily, after a pause.

"Yes, Harvey has promised to help her with money, so that she can obtain the title and property."

"That is kind of him."

"She'll pay him back when she gets what she has a right to, and this will be a chance for you, and Hilda, and our kid to go back to the foggy island also."

"No, Jack, dear," answered Emily, firmly. "I am determined not to leave you."

"Really?"

"Certainly. If you think your honour requires that you must hunt down Barboni, I will stop and help you all I can, however much I may regret your resolution."

"I'll never leave the thief."

"Then it is no use my urging you any further."

"Not in the least."

Emily heaved a deep sigh.

"I am very sorry to refuse you any thing, dearest," he replied, "but I should despise myself if I didn't finish up the work I have in hand."

"Say no more, Jack. I won't be afraid if you're not."

"There is nothing to be in a funk about."

"I don't know. Some times I have strange misgivings. But I won't frighten you with my woman's nonsense."

"When is Lady Darrel going?"

"She leaves in the steamer to-day," replied Emily.

"What a change for her and that poor boy, Luni," said Jack musingly.

"Is it not?"

"After all her sufferings she deserves a little happiness, though she will never take any place in society," continued Jack, "after her connection with the brigand."

"All she wants," replied Emily, "so she tells me, is to obtain the title for Luni, and the money, and she means to live in strict seclusion abroad, though I think she is too much broken down to live long."

"So do I," answered Jack. "However, go and do what you can for her, and make some excuse for me not seeing her off, as I want to put on my thinking cap again."

"All right, dear," said Emily. "One kiss before I go."

"Only one?" asked Jack.

"I shall have two if I like. You owe me a lot for being away so long," answered Emily, pouting her lips.

Jack kissed her half-a-dozen times, and she tripped away to see of what use she could be to Lady Darrel and Luni, though her heart was heavy again at her husband's firm determination not to leave Naples until he had brought Barboni to justice.

She knew his resolute character.

She also knew the cleverness of the brigand, and felt sure that he would give them much trouble yet.

"Poor Emmy," said Jack to himself. "It isn't a very likely lookout for her, but I must stick to Barboni."

If Jack was plotting, so was the brigand.

Cruelly beaten at all points, with the murdered bodies of his mother and his son before his eyes, he plotted.

The result of his reflections will shortly be seen.

While Jack was in the garden, unsuspecting of coming evil, Ligamini was in Naples.

He had come disguised as an Italian peasant selling fruit.

His first visit was to an old clothes shop, where he purchased certain articles of ladies' wearing apparel.

The Jew who kept the shop was a friend of his, and being well paid for his second-hand goods, assisted him all he could.

Bigamini put on a very gaudy dress over his own clothes, and a bonnet of showy colours.

He shaved off all the hair on his face.

He then blacked his skin with walnut juice, to make himself the colour of Monday.

Taking a look at himself in the glass, he thought he should pass very well for a lady from Limbi.

His plan was to obtain access to Harkaway's house in the disguise of a foreign woman, because he wished to pass as Mole's wife.

He had heard much of Ambonia.

Mole declared that she went down with the ship when it was wrecked.

But Bigamini intended to swear that she was saved, and had come to claim her husband, finding him out with much difficulty and after many days.

It would be a surprise to Mr. Mole.

Bigamini hated Mole.

It was not to gratify his hatred that he determined to personate his wife, but because he wanted to get into the house.

He had a deeply-laid scheme to carry out.

Barboni had hit upon it after deliberation, and promised the spy a rich reward if he was successful.

When made up, Bigamini made a capital Ambonia.

He had a squeaking voice like a woman's, and he could act tolerably well.

Having made himself up to his satisfaction, he left the old clothes shop, and started for the house in which the friends were staying.

Monday had got rid of the butler, who was put in his place during his absence on the war-path.

"Um soon give him a dirty kick out," he remarked.

And he did.

The man went without an hour's delay, and Monday was reinstalled in his pantry.

Mr. Mole took possession of the arm-chair, as before.

It was a very hot morning when Bigamini was carrying out the orders of his superior.

Mr. Mole's constitution required a good deal of seeing to.

He found that iced champagne agreed with him remarkably well.

At midday he was drinking this refreshing beverage, and smoking cigarettes in the pantry.

With his legs stretched out on a chair, and Monday standing near him, Mr. Mole looked like an Eastern pasha.

Clear-the-Track happened to pass by, on his way to the garden, where Harkaway was, and to whom he wanted to expound a speedy way of exterminating the brigands.

He saw Mr. Mole, and stopped.

"Hi, there!" he cried. "Is that your usual form?"

"I do not see that I am under any obligation to gratify your curiosity," answered Mole.

"Don't you?"

"No."

"What does Harkaway keep you for?"

"I am his son's tutor," replied Mole.

"I shall call you Harkaway's ornament."

"His what?"

"His vanity or his ornament; for I'll be jiggered if you're useful," said Clear-the-Track.

"Monday, kick that man out, and I will reward you handsomely," cried Mole.

"Kick um out, sare?" repeated Monday, with a grin.

"Yes, do as I tell you," replied Mr. Mole.

"What reward um give, sare?"

"I am poor, but you shall have a—my old palm hat. *Palmarum qui meruit ferat*; let him who wins the palm wear it, as we say in the classics."

"It would take a pretty good-sized nigger to kick me out," said Clear-the-Track.

Monday glared at him savagely

After a little while, he again spoke.

"Me a prince," he said.

"I'm sorry for the royal family you belong to," replied Sam.

"What um sorry for?"

"Guess you'd better chalk your mug," said Sam.

"Go out of this," said Monday.

"Certainly not. I'm a guest of Mr. Harvey, and you're the boss's help."

"You no right in my pantry."

"Turn me out, then."

Monday made a rush at Clear-the-Track, who struck out, but the black ducked his head, seized the American by the left leg, and threw him over his shoulder into the passage.

Picking himself up, Clear-the-Track laughed and rubbed his back.

"Guess that's a lick," he cried. "Where did you learn that chuck, Sambo?"

"Um name Monday."

"Well, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, who taught you that little game?"

"Um want to know?"

"I reckon I do, or I shouldn't ask."

"Then um better find out."

Monday was about to close the door when a noise of footsteps was heard.

"Who come now!" he asked.

A woman appeared at the door.

"What um want here?" cried Monday.

"Don't you know me?" replied the woman.

"You black woman."

"Yes; I come from Limbi."

"Ha! that my island. Who you want?"

"My husband."

"Who him be?"

"Mister Mole. I am Ambonia."

"What!" cried Monday, "you Mist' Mole's wife? He say you drowned at sea."

"I was saved; but for months I have been very ill. Where is he? They told me he was here."

Mr. Mole heard this discussion at the door.

He got up, shaking with fear, and took a cautious look.

It was enough for him.

Retreating, he crawled under the table, making frantic signs to Monday.

"Come in, mum," said Monday. "How you leave 'um all in Limbi? Did um want King Matabella back?"

Monday certainly did not recognise Ambonia in the figure before him, but then she had spoken of a long illness, and that might have changed her very much.

"I shan't talk about anything," replied the pretended Ambonia. "What I want is my husband, and I mean to have him."

She walked in and looked about her.

Mr. Mole was nowhere to be seen.

Turning to Clear-the-Track, she cried—

"Have you seen Mr. Mole?"

"That's a question," replied Sam.

Drawing a knife, she continued—

"I have black blood in my veins. I will kill those who trifle with me."

Sam had no particular wish to be stabbed, and he enjoyed a joke as well as anybody.

Besides which, he owed Mole a grudge.

Pointing to the table, he said—

"Moles hide in the dark."

The false Ambonia took the hint.

Seizing a stick, she began poking under the table.

"Come out," she cried. "Once I was a happy Ambonia now I'm a miserable Mrs. Mole."

Groans proceeded from the region below the table.

"I will have my rights. *Santa Maria!* as these strange people say, I will be revenged."

There were more pokes with the stick.

Mr. Mole had a narrow escape of losing one eye as his upper teeth were loosened.

Getting up, he showed himself.

"What the deuce do you mean, woman?" he cried, rubbing his back.

Ambonia threw her arms around him and held him in a tight embrace, as if at sight of him all her anger vanished.

"Oh, Isaac! oh, my Mole!" she cried, "do I clasp thee in my arms once more?"

"I wish you wouldn't clasp so tight," he answered. "You'll have all the breath out of me."

"What happiness to meet again!"

Mr. Mole disengaged himself from her embrace.


"I say," he cried, "you talk very good English, Amby."

"Do I, dear?"

"Better than you used to."

"I've been learning for your sake," she replied.

"It's very odd," said Mole, suspiciously.



Ambonia clasped him again in her arms, and gave him a squeeze that a grizzly bear might have been proud of.

"Oh, you dear!" she cried.

Again Mr. Mole pushed her gently away.

"I say," he cried again, "you've grown taller."

"Fancy, my love," replied Ambonia.

"You're not all my fancy painted you. Get out; I hate you," said Mole. "Your absence has not improved you."

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

"Not in my case. Get out."

"Would you insult your loving wife! Sit down," said Ambonia, giving him a shove which sent him into the arm-chair.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Mr. Mole; "oh, she's knocked all the wind out of me."

Monday's bell rang.

He went upstairs, and coming down, put some bottles and glasses on a tray.

"Um young gentleman want um wine," he said.

"Let me help you," said Ambonia.

She fussed about with the glasses, and slipped a white powder into each.

Monday's eyes were very quick.

He detected the trick, sharply as it had been played.

Taking up one glass, he poured some wine into it.

"You drink this," he said.

"Me drink?" replied Ambonia.

"Yes."

"I'm not thirsty."

Seizing her by the back of the neck, Monday forced the wine down her throat, and held her in his powerful grasp for more than a minute.

"Um got it all?" he asked.

"Let me go," replied Ambonia.

"Not got it quite all; some spilt," continued Monday.

The pretended Ambonia sank to the ground.

"What have you done to my wife?" asked Mr. Mole.

"I'm poisoned; oh, dear! Once I was a happy Smiff—I mean Ambonia—and now I'm a miserable Big—that is—oh, dear! oh, my! I've got the gripes awful bad—oh, oh!"

He rolled on the floor in agony.

At one time he would clutch at anything within his reach, at the next press his hands to his stomach and groan dismally.

Clear-the-Track had watched this strange scene with silent interest.

Advancing to the table, he took up one of the glasses.

Wetting his finger, he touched the powder, and tasted it with his tongue.

"Arsenic, I guess," he said, spitting it out.

A dastardly attempt had been made to poison the Englishmen.

In the wretch's agony his wig came off.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

He picked it up, and gazed curiously at the writhing creature.

"Why," he said, "it's not my wife at all."

"Eh?—what's that?" said Monday.

"It's not Ambonia."

"Somebody play um trick?"

"There's no doubt about that; it's a man. Why, it's—
it's Bigamini."

"Ha! Bigamy come here in disguise to frighten all, and then try to poison? But he get um poison himself. How him like it?" said Monday.

Finding he was discovered, the wretched spy did not attempt any further concealment.

He thought his last hour had come.

"Spare me, gentlemen," he cried. "Oh, send for a doctor; get a stomach pump. Oh, Lor'! do something; I'm on fire. Oh, oh!"

"He looks as if he'd been eating vinegar with a fork," remarked Sam.

"I think he looks like a cat in a dogkennel with his claws cut," said Mr. Mole.

"Do you want to save him?" asked Sam.

"He is a spy of the brigands," answered Mole.

"Is he to die like this?"

"Oh, kind sir, save me—do something," cried Bigamini, writhing like an eel.

"Shall we hand him over to the police? If so, he will be executed," said Mole.

"That's best."

"Save him, then, if you can."

"Right, clear the track," cried Sam.

"What um want, sare?" asked Monday.

"Wake up, kinky head," continued Sam. "If we don't

want Old Scratch to have him, we must look sharp. Get out salt and mustard."

Sam poured some water in a clean tumbler, and mixed a quantity of salt and mustard together.

This was an emetic.

He forced Bigamini to drink the mixture, and held his head over a bucket, having the satisfaction of seeing him throw up the poison.

Still the pain continued.

Bigamini's limbs became cold and rigid, while he turned pale as death, shaking like an aspen, and groaning like a door in the wind on a rusty hinge.

In fact, he showed all the symptoms of arsenical poisoning.

"In another quarter of an hour, he'd have been right off the handle, I calculate," said Sam.

"I must inform Harkaway of what has happened," said Mr. Mole.

He went in search of him for that purpose.

When Jack heard that Bigamini had had the audacity to penetrate into his house, under the disguise of Ambonia, and attempt to poison them all, he was highly indignant.

At the same time he was much alarmed.

It showed him how sleepless was the enmity of Barboni.

At a time when the brigand might have been expected to be trying to console himself for his losses, he was in reality trying how he could injure his foes.

"This is most providential," said Jack.

"I may say, Harkaway," cried Mr. Mole, "that it was I who by a wink aroused Monday's suspicions."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, I have an eye like a lynx, and fancied that the fellow was imposing on me."

"Will he live?"

"Your American friend says so."

"We must put him on a bed, and keep him locked up in a room until he is sufficiently recovered to be handed over to the authorities."

"It gave me a turn at first," said Mole.

"What did?"

"To think that the wolf Ambonia had come back to torment me, though as I saw her sink I could not make it out," replied Mole.

"It's clear you weren't born to be drowned, sir," said Jack, smiling. "You have escaped the water too often."

"Do you mean to imply that I am born to be hanged, Harkaway?"

"No, I didn't say that."

"You implied it."

"Not you, sir. You're long enough already, and don't want stretching."

"That's what I say," exclaimed the little coxswain, who had heard about the attempted poisoning from Clear-the-Track, and had come to speak to Jack about it.

"I don't want to be insulted by you," said Mole.

"I'll dry up," replied Walter.

"Harkaway," said Mole, impressively, "am I or am I not the learned professor to whom you have entrusted the education of your child?"

"Of course you are."

"I am Professor Mole, of Oxford University."

"Yes, sir."

"And specially appointed tutor to Master Harkaway."

"Certainly."

"Then it is your duty to uphold my position, respect my authority, and not suffer me to be turned into ridicule by anybody, and more especially to prevent me from being insulted by the low chaff of a Cambridge coxswain, who never won a race in his life."

"That's a cram," said Walter.

Mr. Mole waved his hand.

"You are beneath my notice," he said, "and I will not lower myself by wasting breath on such an animal."

"You pedantic old humbug, you're tight," said Walter.

"Harkaway, you hear."

"Shut up, Walter," said Jack.

"I shan't. What does he mean by his cheek? I've won lots of races for my college."

"We know that."

"I'll have it out of him," continued Walter.

A short distance off there was a small pond, in the centre of which rose a fountain.

Gold and silver fish disported themselves in the basin.

The depth was about four feet.

Seizing Mr. Mole suddenly by the collar of his coat and his trousers, he ran him to the fountain.

"Hi! help! hi! This is an outrage. Harkaway, help me. I'll throw up my post; I'll—oh!"

The little coxswain gave him a shove, and he fell into the water on his hands and knees, looking like a big, awkward fish crawling on the bottom.

Sam came out into the garden at the time.

He, as well as Walter, was an enemy of Mole's, and when he saw the professor standing up, dripping wet and spluttering the water out of his mouth, he fairly roared with laughter:

"Oh, look at him," he cried; "see him cutting his Jim Crow capers. Who's done this?"

"I did," replied the little coxswain, proudly.

"Let's feel your flesh; give us your hand. Guess he'll be out soon, like Mount Vesuvius on a bust."

Mr. Mole did get out, looking very damp and uncomfortable.

"I'll pay you for this, my lad," he said, shaking his fist.

"Don't you get excited," said Walter.

"I won't forget you, my boy."

"You poverty-stricken old Latin grammar, I'll chuck you in again," cried Walter.

"Don't taunt me with my poverty," replied Mr. Mole, "or I'll let out."

"I don't care."

"What are you but a penniless adventurer?" continued Mole.

"I know I'm not rich."

"Have you a trade by which you can gain your living?"

"I'm a gentleman."

"Have you a profession?"

"No; I shall have some day."

"Don't you live here at Harvey's and Harkaway's expense?"

"I am young Harkaway's tutor," continued Mole, with dignity. "I don't hang on and sponge on my friends, with a view to marrying an heiress."

"What do you mean?" asked the little coxswain, turning red.

"You may well blush, you idle young scamp. You hope to marry Miss Cockles, with her six thousand a year, and then you think you can live on her and never do a stroke of honest work all your life."

The coxswain was about to rush on Mr. Mole again.

But Jack laid his powerful hand on his shoulder, and restrained him.

"Don't do any more," he said.

"Isn't he an insulting old beast?"

"You began it."

"I'll——"

"No, you won't; be guided by me, please," interrupted Jack, in his quiet, firm way.

"It's rather hard."

"Whatever his faults are, Mr. Mole is my guest, and I'll have no more of this."

"Thank you, Harkaway," said Mr. Mole; "you're a gentleman. I wish I could say as much for some of your friends."

"Guess he's given you *toko*," said Sam.

Mr. Mole proceeded to place himself in a sunny spot.

"Harkaway," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"I am going to lie on my face and dry my back. Will you send Monday out presently to turn me?"

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him to bring my cask, will you? I've got the cramp in the stomach."

Jack promised to do so, and, taking the arms of Sam and Walter, led them into the house.

Bigamini was better, but really was, or pretended to be, so weak that he could not answer any questions that were put to him.

He was placed in a room on the ground floor, covered over with a blanket, and locked up.

It was considered a good capture.

Bigamini had been a most useful spy of the brigand.

He had done him much excellent service.

Consequently, to frustrate his designs, capture him, and ultimately hand him over to the authorities, was to inflict another blow on Barboni.

"We've scored over the brigand again," said Jack, much pleased.

That General Cialdini would order the spy to be hanged without trial was more than probable.

Even if he had to go through the formality of a trial, his doom was certain.

He would shortly die upon the scaffold.

But Bigamini was not dead yet.

No sooner was the door shut upon him, and the bolt shot back in the lock, than he sat up in the bed.

He looked curiously around him.

Then he uttered a feeble chuckle.

"I'm not so bad, since I had that emetic, as they think," he muttered.

He took another quiet look round the room.

"I've got out of stronger cribs than this," he added.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE EXECUTION.

THE beautiful and accomplished Contessa di Malafedi had been tried as an accomplice of Barboni.

Among her papers captured by the police were incontestable proofs that she was in league with the brigand.

She had received large sums as her reward.

It was proved that she gave the Prince di Villanova all the help she could, well knowing that he was Barboni the brigand.

She had turned her palazzo into a gambling saloon.

False dice and marked cards were used.

The nobility of Naples, as well as rich foreigners, had been plundered in her rooms.

All her friends fell away from her now that the mask was torn from her face.

She was found guilty.

The sentence passed upon her was that she should be publicly executed.

Her death was to be a disgraceful one.

She was to be hanged.

The execution was to take place at six o'clock on the day on which Bigamini's plot had failed.

Walter Campbell had made up his mind to go and witness it.

"Shall you go?" he asked Jack.

"I think not," replied Jack.

"There will be lots of time. We don't dine till eight, and all Naples will be there."

"Don't go, Jack dear," said Emily. "I feel for the poor thing."

"I don't," replied Jack.

"We were her friends once."

"But we didn't know what a traitress she was."

"Harvey shan't go," said Hilda, who had a will of her own, and occasionally let her husband know it.

"Won't you go, Dick?" said Jack, mischievously.

"I'm under orders. Didn't you hear?" replied Harvey. "Besides, I must say frankly, that, though I should like to see Barboni make his exit, I don't care about looking on while a woman is being shamefully and cruelly sent out of the world."

"She deserves it," said Walter.

"Granted."

"I think," observed Lily Cockles, in her mild way, "that Mr. Campbell would be better at home."

He went up to her.

"Don't you wish me to go," he asked, softly.

"I would not dictate to you, dear," she answered, "because you know that I have promised to be your wife when all these troubles are over."

"That's a secret, though, at present," said the little coxswain.

"Yes. I have not told anybody. Still I feel for the poor creature, as Emily says."

"I can't do her any harm by going to see."

"Go if you like."

"I'll tell you fellows why I want to go," exclaimed Walter, loudly.

"Why?" asked Jack.

"I was at the Café di Europa to-day, and I heard several Italian gentlemen making bets that Barboni would rescue her."

"What?"

"That Barboni would attempt a rescue."

"Nonsense."

"It may be ridiculous, but I only mention what I heard. It was a common report," replied Walter.

"Wall," said Clear-the-Track, "I guess I've got no gal to keep me from going to see the fun. I've come to Europe to see what they do in the old world, and I'm on for this dancing job."

"Will you come with me?" asked Walter.

"Will a live nigger eat apple squash, or lie in the sun, or drink rum?"

"That's a bargain, then, I've found a pal."

"Guess you're right this journey," answered Sam.

Neither Emily nor Hilda would allow their husbands to go to the execution.

Consequently Walter and Sam determined to go together.

Mr. Mole had dried himself in the sun, and having fortified himself with some whisky out of his cask, went to sleep.

He woke up with a headache and went upstairs.

"Ah, it is nice and cool here," he said. Harkaway, I see some iced champagne. May I help myself?"

"Certainly."

"I have had nothing to-day."

"Nothing, sir."

"Not a drop of any thing has passed my lips. Ah, Mr. Campbell—Mr. Clear-the-Track—odd name that—do we meet as friends?"

"I've nothing new against you," replied Sam.

"And I rubbed off old scores this morning," answered Walter.

"That is right. Never bear malice. Capital wine this. Where are you off to, may I ask?"

"To see the execution."

"Whose?"

"That of the contessa."

"Indeed? I heard something about it; but such spectacles are not to my taste. I will stay at home," said Mr. Mole.

The little coxswain and Sam departed together.

They found a large crowd wending its way to the plaza in which the tragedy was to take place.

Pushing through the throng, they came to a small restaurant and wine shop.

"First floor to let for the execution. Private room. One hundred ducats."

This placard met their gaze.

"Cheap at the price," said Clear-the-Track.

"Yes."

"Shall we take it?"

"I haven't the coin," replied Walter.

"That's nothing. I've got lots. You never saw an American travel without money. My father made a pile in shoddy

during the war, and I've done something speculating in gold. Well, that's the place."

"We shall be out of the crowd," said Walter.

"I'll pay. Clear the track, there."

Sam pushed his way to the door, and taking some notes from his pocket, paid for the room.

They ascended the stairs, called for wine, and lighted their cigars.

The view was excellent.

They could see the scaffold erected in the centre of the square, as well as the gloomy walls of the prison from which the contessa was to emerge.

Out of the surging throng, they could see every thing without being jostled and pushed about.

"Good quarters," said Walter.

"Very," said Sam.

A double row of troops surrounded the scaffold, and at each corner of the plaza was a small force of horse soldiers.

The Englishmen remarked a number of men in the crowd who wore slouched hats and long, thick cloaks.

They were standing in threes and fours.

A tall man went from one knot to another, and spoke a few words earnestly as if giving instructions.

"Those fellows look deucedly like brigands," exclaimed Walter.

"Well," replied Sam, "I don't know that you're far wrong."

"Barboni's a daring fellow if he means to try a rescue."

"More wonderful things than that have happened, I reckon."

"Shall you interfere if he does?"

"Not I," replied Sam.

"It isn't our business," said Walter.

A bell began to toll solemnly.

The gates of the prison opened, and a party set out on the way to the scaffold.

A lane was formed by the efforts of police and troops, who kept the people back.

No curses or angry cries were heard.

The mob seemed to sympathise with the culprit.

On the scaffold stood the executioner.

In front of the procession came a priest carrying a huge cross.

After him were six priests praying.

Then came twelve soldiers.

After them walked the prisoner.

She was clad wholly in white, wearing a loose robe and her head and feet were bare.

On each side of her walked a priest holding a crucifix, and whispering the consolations of the church.

Suddenly the priest in advance began to chant the "Miserere."

It sounded like a dirge for the dead.

At intervals the bell tolled.

The contessa's eyes were red with weeping, but she held up her head bravely and flashed defiance at the crowd.

Her long black hair streamed over her shoulders.

Behind her came more soldiers.

In their rear was another body of priests, and last of all came several prison officials.

The contessa cast her eyes anxiously from time to time round the square, as if looking for someone.

From the café where the Englishmen had taken up their position, she saw a handkerchief flutter.

Was it a signal?

Walter Campbell saw it too.

"I say," he exclaimed.

"What?" asked Sam.

"Did you see that white flag fluttering from the window of the next room?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"I don't know. It's odd. How well the contessa looks! Isn't she beautiful?"

"I guess she's too good to kill," said Sam.

Suddenly there was a great swaying of the crowd.

The men in slouched hats whom Walter had noticed made a rush upon the procession.

Fierce oaths and bitter cries were heard.

Shots were fired and knives used freely.

The line of police and soldiers was broken through.

All at once a thick cloak was thrown over the contessa, and she disappeared in the crowd.

Still the fighting went on.

The soldiers did not know what to do.

If they fired on the crowd, they would kill innocent people.

"Look, look!" exclaimed Walter, excitedly.

A man on horseback, at the northern extremity of the

crowd, was seen to snatch a burden from the hands of two men.

He placed it on his saddle in front of him.

Then a loud voice was heard.

It rang through the square and found an echo in the walls of the houses.

"Vi saluta Barboni!"

It was the proud cry of the brigand chief.

Away went the horse and its rider with his burden.

Sparks flew from the stones beneath the feet of the gallant steed.

In vain were shots fired after him. Fruitless were the efforts of the cavalry to escape from the crowd and pursue the robber.

He was off like the arrow from the bow.

Gone from the sight of the heaving, panting, surging multitude like a flash of lightning.

And with him went the prisoner.

The cloaked burden he carried with him was the Contessa di Malafedi.

Barboni never forgave an enemy.

But at the same time he never deserted a friend.

There was a great commotion in the crowd.

The soldiers were striking right and left.

With cries of rage the mob scattered and fled.

This gave the cavalry room to act.

"But it was too late.

"Bravo!" cried the little coxswain.

"By George! that Barboni's a plucky fellow."

"May I have snakes in my boots, and be whipped by a nigger, if ever saw anything like it," said Sam.

"He cleared the track, as you say."

"Guess he did that fine—rather."

The slouched hats men disappeared with the people.

It was with some disappointment that the Italians separated, and sought their favourite cafés or their homes.

They had been cheated out of the execution.

Barboni had rescued his friend and accomplice, the Contessa di Malafedi, and soon they would be sheltered in the bosom of the everlasting hills.

Those among the crowd who were injured by the soldiers, or trodden on by the horses when the cavalry rode the people down, were taken to the hospital.

Soon the square was deserted.

Only a patrol of soldiers remained.

Walter and Sam returned to the Strada di Toledo.

"Well," said Jack, "you're just in time for dinner, if the horrid sight you have witnessed has not taken away your appetites."

"They don't deserve any dinner," remarked Emily

"I shall never like them again," observed Hilda, with a shudder.

"What are you storming at?" asked Walter.

"Why, you ought to know. You've been to see that poor creature killed."

"We haven't seen any thing of the sort."

"Did you not go?"

"Yes."

"Then you must have seen it."

"There is no 'must' about it," replied Walter.

"Don't mystify me," said Jack. "How did she die?"

"She didn't die."

"Eh?"

"Barboni rescued her."

"The—I mean—confound it! How did that happen?" cried Jack.

Walter related all that had occurred, to the great astonishment of his hearers.

"I never heard such a thing," said Jack.

"Nor I," replied Harvey.

"I thought we had cut his claws, and he is as game as ever."

"Well," said Emily, "she deserves to be punished, but I'm not sorry she has got off, poor thing."

"Nor I," replied Harvey.

"You women are always tender-hearted," replied Jack. "For my part, I'd kill everyone who was in the slightest degree connected with that scoundrel Barboni."

"I agree with Emily," said Hilda. "The contessa has suffered enough."

"I don't think we ought to kill any thing," remarked Lily.

"I'm knocked into a three-cornered hat," said Jack. "The devil must help Barboni."

Monday appeared at the door.

"Dinner on um table," he said.

The ladies and gentlemen paired off, and the whole party descended to the dining-room.

CHAPTER LIX.

YOUNG JACK DISAPPEARS.

DURING dinner nothing was talked of but the escape of the contessa.

When the meal was over, the four gentlemen proceeded to the Café di Europa, where they were accustomed to meet the *élite* of Neapolitan society.

Here they would be sure to obtain the opinions of the leaders of society.

No one seemed to regret the contessa's escape.

Lately, Barboni had fallen in public estimation.

But this grand affair raised him again to the position of a hero.

While Jack was sipping his iced lemonade and listening to the gossip of the café, events were taking place in his house which were calculated to startle him on his return.

Towards evening, Bigamini had recovered from the effects of the poison.

He was weak, but the pain had subsided.

According to orders, Monday visited him every half hour.

When Bigamini heard him coming, he pretended to groan and be in great pain.

"Um laugh t'other side of um mouth, now," said Monday, grinning.

At nine o'clock, Bigamini asked for some brandy and water, and a slice of bread.

This Monday supplied him with.

"You're very kind to me, Mr. Monday," said Bigamini, humbly.

"Um like to do what's right," answered Monday.

"It's more than I deserve."

"That's true enough."

"I'm a wicked wretch. You don't know how bad I am, Mr. Monday."

"Um make pretty good guess."

"I've committed bigamy, and even murder. Ah, it was a

unlucky hour when I left my wife, and came over here to turn brigand."

"Soon be all over," said Monday, jerking his head on one side with pantomimic action, to indicate that he would speedily be hanged.

"Well," replied Bigamini, with a sigh of resignation, "I deserve it."

"Why you kill poor witch? Why you try poison people?" asked Monday.

"It's all Barboni's fault."

"Is it?"

"Yes," said Bigamini, with a shake of the head. "He tells me to do certain things, and if I refused, he would kill me."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, it's a fearful thing to be a brigand."

"Um want any more brandy?" asked Monday, thrown off his guard by the little man's submissive manner.

"If I may tax your good nature so far, I should esteem it a favour to have another glass."

"Very well."

"It comforts my stomach after the poison."

"All um own fault."

"I know it. Don't overwhelm me with reproaches, Mr. Monday."

Bigamini munched the bread, and Monday gave him some more spirit from a bottle which he held in his hand.

Presently Bigamini said—

"What do you think they will do with me, sir?"

"Give you up to-morrow."

"To whom?"

"Um police, I suppose. Then um be tried for being a brigand, and trying to poison."

"It will soon be over. Ah, well, how different my fate might have been. Mr. Monday, take my advice."

"What that?"

"Take warning from me, and beware of the first false step. If I had never been a wicked Smiffins, I should not have become a miserable Bigamini."

"That so."

"And if I'd never been a miserable Bigamini, I should not now be a condemned brigand."

"Honesty um best policy," said Monday.

"Oh, yes. How the lessons of my childhood come back to me!" said Bigamini, clasping his hands in mock humility. "How I call to mind the simple prayers I murmured at my mother's knee!"

He covered his face with his hands and wept.

The tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Don't um cry," said Monday. "Every brave man ought to be able to die."

"I'm not a brave man, kind Mr. Monday."

"Have drop more of um brandy, and then I lock um for um night."

"No more, thank you kindly. I wish to spend the night in looking back on my past life."

"Um heard the news?" asked Monday.

"What news? Do you mean about the contessa? Has Barboni done it, eh? Quick, speak, man!" cried Bigamini.

He threw off his sentimental, whining manner, and evinced real excitement.

"Yes, he am rescue um contessa."

"Bravo! Barboni can do it. Hurrah! We're in it yet!" cried Bigamini, getting up, and dancing about the floor.

Monday stared at him in amazement.

"I say," he said, "um not dead yet."

"No, nor don't mean to be," replied Bigamini.

As he spoke, he drew from the sleeve of his coat an iron bar.

This he had torn from the bottom of the bedstead, and concealed for use when the opportunity offered.

Monday shrank back.

He was unarmed.

Bigamini fell upon him with a suddenness which took him completely by surprise.

The bar descended on his head.

He staggered and sank down with an inarticulate murmur.

"That's a topper for you, my black beauty," cried Bigamini.

Monday lay still and motionless.

His head was broken, and he was stunned.

For a moment Bigamini hesitated whether or not he should kill him outright.

"What's the use?" he muttered. "He's quiet enough."

If I kill him, it will only make them more savage against me, if I should fall into their hands again."

The spy had his own clothes on under the feminine garments he had donned to represent Ambonia.

Slipping these off, he was once more Bigamini, the spy.

Grasping the bar of iron, so as to be able to attack any one who might impede his progress, he quitted the chamber.

The key was in the lock.

He turned it, and taking it out, put it in his pocket.

Having been in the house several times, he knew his way about pretty well.

Stealing along the passage, he peeped in at the servants' hall.

The nurses were at supper.

Consequently the nursery was left unguarded.

Creeping up the stairs, he paused a moment at the open door of the drawing-room.

Emily was at the piano. She was playing and singing a plaintive song.

Bigamini heard the words—

"And my darling, though absent, is thinking of me."

"He'll think of me when he comes back," he muttered.

Lily and Hilda were talking together.

Mr. Mole had gone to sleep in the armchair, with a pocket-handkerchief over his face to keep off the flies.

Going up another flight of stairs, Bigamini came to the nursery.

A lamp was burning on the table.

In a small cot, young Jack was fast asleep.

From his pocket Bigamini took a rag steeped in chloroform.

This he laid over the face of the sleeping boy.

With his heart beating quickly, he waited for the space of a minute.

Then the drug had done its work.

Young Jack Harkaway would make no sound now.

"You're a settled member," said Bigamini, with a diabolical grin.

He wrapped the young gentleman up in the quilt, and taking him in his arms, quitted the nursery.

No one heard him descend the stairs.

The servants being at supper, the gentlemen out, and Monday laid by the heels with a broken head, there was nobody to stop him.

He gained the street.

Out he ran into the darkness. On, on, until the limits of the city were passed.

On the Pompeii road a carriage and pair was waiting.

Near it a man with one arm was lounging.

"You've been long enough," he exclaimed.

"Pardon, Signor Hunstoni," replied Bigamini. "It is a chance that I am here at all."

"How's that?"

"I got nabbed."

"It's all right now, though?"

"Yes."

"Have you got the kid?"

Bigamini pointed to the burden he held in his arms.

"Jump in quick," said Hunston. "The soldiers are about every where, and it's not safe to linger."

"I've heard the news, signor."

"Don't stand jabbering there. Jump in, I tell you, or I shall have to help you."

Bigamini entered the carriage.

Hunston took a seat by his side, the coachman cracked his whip, and the carriage rolled off at a rapid pace towards the Volturmo.

Lighting a cigar, Hunston offered one to Bigamini.

"I'd rather have a drop of something to drink," said the latter.

"Why?"

"I'm not strong enough to smoke, but I'd better tell you what has happened."

"Fire away."

Bigamini related the adventure, and Hunston, having compassion upon him, handed him his flask.

"I wish you'd poisoned the lot," he said. "But you haven't done badly. We can hit Harkaway through his child."

"Is it true, signor," asked Bigamini, "that the contessa is free?"

"Yes, we managed that very well. It was a regular surprise for the soldiers."

"Is she with the master?"

"Of course. Don't you know that the Contessa Di Malafedi is Barboni's wife?"

"Never!"

"She is."

"Who'd have thought it?" said Bigamini.

"She's been his wife this ever so long, and that's why she helped him and us so often."

"Barboni can do it when he likes," said Bigamini, in a tone of admiration.

"This is the biggest thing he has done yet, but he swore he would not desert her. We had all sworn to die rather than leave her in the lurch."

"Did we lose any men?"

"Only two. Lots of townspeople were shot and bayoneted, but I drew off our fellows directly we had completed the surprise," answered Hunston.

"I'm glad they didn't hang her, poor lady," said Bigamini. "I've got a horror of being hanged."

"So have I. Don't talk about it," said Hunston.

Bigamini uncovered the child's face, and the moonlight played upon the quiescent features.

"By Jove! isn't he like Harkaway?" exclaimed Hunston.

"Yes," replied Bigamini. "He is."

"He's the image of the old boy. I'd swear that was Jack's son among a thousand."

"Wonder how he'll look without his ears," said Bigamini with a grin.

"Don't you dare to grin in that familiar manner when you're with me," exclaimed Hunston, "or I'll put a bullet into your ugly carcase."

"No, sir," replied Bigamini, submissively. "If I forgot for the moment that you were our lieutenant."

"Bear it in mind, then."

"Yes, sir; I'm only a miserable Bigamini. Once I was a happy Smiff——"

Hunston gave him a blow with his fist, which caused his teeth to chatter and made his mouth bleed.

"Will you try that cant on with me?" he exclaimed.

Bigamini wiped his lips with the back of his hand, and sinking into a corner, rocked the child and made no answer.

But his eyes glared in the semi-darkness like live coals.

If he had dared he would have stuck a knife into Hunston, he hated him so.

As for Hunston, he kept his hand on his pistol, as he knew the treacherous nature of the spy, and smoked his cigar in silence, while the carriage was being driven towards its destination.

Young Jack remained stupefied with the chloroform. He uttered neither plaint nor cry.

CHAPTER LX.

THE DISCOVERY.

MR. MOLE woke up suddenly and kicked over a chair.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Emily; "whatever is the matter, Mr. Mole?"

"I've had a bad dream," he murmured.

"What about?"

"I thought someone planted Harkaway in the ground like a tree, and then another man came and chopped him down."

"How absurd!" said Hilda.

"Isn't it?" remarked Emily.

"I believe in dreams," said Lily Cockles, "and I hope this one does not mean bad luck."

Suddenly Monday's wife, Ada, ran into the room.

She held up her hands despairingly, and seemed in great grief.

"Oh, ma'am!" she said. "Oh, Mrs. Harkaway!"

Emily sprang to her feet.

"What is it, Ada?" she asked.

"Oh, ma'am, I can't find words. It's too dreadful!"

All a mother's apprehensions were aroused.

Emily became deathly white, but she did not faint.

Seizing the girl by the arm, she pinched her till she hurt her, saying—

"Speak, woman, speak!"

"Master Harkaway's gone, ma'am."

"Gone?"

"Yes, ma'am. He isn't in his cot, and I've looked all over the house for him."

Emily sank back.

She would have fallen, had not Hilda caught her in her arms.

"God in His mercy help me and take pity," murmured Emily.

"Be brave, dear," whispered Hilda.

"Oh, I cannot! My son! my child! my darling. Give me my darling. Give him me, or I shall go mad."

At this moment, the footsteps of the gentlemen returning from the Café Di Europa were audible on the stairs.

They were conversing merrily.

Jack appeared in the doorway. He saw his wife half-fainting in Hilda's arms.

"What is the matter?" he asked, anxiously.

His voice roused her.

"Oh, Jack! Our son—he is gone. Ada can't find him. Heaven help us!" sobbed Emily.

"The child gone?" repeated Jack, looking at Ada.

The girl began to cry.

He shook her roughly.

"Why don't you speak?" he cried.

"It's true, sir," she answered.

"Where have you been?"

"I only went to have my supper, sir, in the hall with the other servants."

"This must be seen to," said Jack. "Dick, come with me, will you, and we'll explore the house? Walter, call Monday, please."

Jack and Harvey ran up stairs.

They searched the house from top to bottom, but they could discover no trace of either the boy or Monday.

Young Jack was gone.

The black was missing also.

"Is the prisoner safe?" asked Harvey.

"We will see," replied Jack, a terrible suspicion of the truth flashing across his mind.

They tried the door.

It was locked, and in the absence of Monday, who, acting the part of gaoler, held the key, they were forced to break it open.

Succumbing to the vigorous onslaught from without, the door fell back broken.

Monday was lying on his back groaning.

He had lost blood, and was weak in consequence.

Raising him up, Jack placed him on the bed, and Harvey poured brandy down his throat.

When he could speak, he told how he had been attacked by Bigamini.

He knew no more.

Jack comprehended everything.

The spy had escaped and taken with him the child.

Leaving Harvey to hold up Monday's head, Jack slowly and sorrowfully retraced his steps to the drawing-room.

Emily was hysterical, and went from one fit into another.

Hilda and Lily attended to her, with smelling salts and other restoratives.

She was like Rachel, mourning for her children, and refused to be comforted.

"Bear up, darling," said Jack. "We will soon have him back again."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, between her sobs. "Barboni will kill him."

"I think not. What object would that attain?"

"Revenge."

"Depend upon it, he will hold the child as a hostage, to make terms for himself," answered Jack.

In an hour or two, Emily was calmer, and listened to her husband's assurances that the boy was in no immediate danger.

The bold abduction of the child threw the whole household into excitement.

Nothing could be done until the morning.

Jack was almost at his wits' end.

He lay awake all that night thinking.

CHAPTER LXI.

YOUNG JACK AMONG THE BRIGANDS.

BARBONI had entrenched himself in the mountains as well as he was able.

He had but forty men left.

Many had been killed in fighting, some had deserted, and altogether his force was considerably reduced since Harkaway had made up his mind to exterminate him and his band.

Hunston was his principal officer, and, as we know, he was shrewd as well as brave.

A position admirably calculated for defence was chosen, and rifle-pits were dug in the side of the mountain.

The brigands had no cave now.

They found shelter in the holes of the rocks, or camped like gipsies under tents in any hollow they could find.

Barboni and the Contessa Di Malafedi occupied the chief tent.

She had long been his wife, and was very grateful to him for saving her life.

The horror of a public execution and the pain of death had been spared her through his bravery.

She had assisted him through long years, during his career of a brigand.

It was a singular thing that everyone who knew Barboni intimately liked him.

He was no vulgar ruffian.

The distraction in which his country was at this time plunged may perhaps be some excuse for the position he took up.

When England was badly governed, outlaws abounded.

The modern brigand is nothing more than a repetition of the outlaw of the past.

He is the result of bad government.

After occupying the position she had held in Naples, it may be supposed that the contessa felt the change very much.

She had to put up with privations.

But she had loved Barboni as he had never loved her, and she did not murmur at the inconvenience to which she was sometimes subjected.

It was nearly evening, and Barboni was standing on the summit of the hill upon which he had pitched his camp.

He held a telescope in his hand, and, putting it to his eye, from time to time, swept the surrounding country.

That he was ill at ease, it required no lengthened examination to discover.

The contessa glided up to him, and, slipping her arm into his, looked up eagerly and anxiously into his eyes.

"*Mio caro*," she cried, "you are fearful of some evil."

"No," he answered in Italian. "The lion may be brought to bay, but he knows not what fear is, though the bullets of the hunters fly round him."

"Oh, *amico mio*," continued the contessa, "do listen to me; listen to the voice of love, and quit this life for ever."

"I will," replied the brigand, with a grim smile.

"When?"

"When I die," he replied.

"Dominico," she said, sadly. "I address you by that name because it is the one I first knew you by."

"Speak on," he said, calmly.

"You made me love you when I was but a mere girl. I have since learnt that I am not your only victim."

"Why worry me with this idle twaddle?" he replied, hastily.

"Bear with me," she said. "You betrayed Lady Darrel; you would have betrayed Miss Lily Cockles. I have heard all the scandal of Naples, and——"

"At any rate, I saved your life," he interrupted, "and, seeing how hunted and worried I am, this is not a nice time to choose to attack me."

"My sweet one," answered the contessa, with a loving look, "I do not attack you. All I want to say is that I love you fondly."

The brigand laughed sneeringly.

"Oh, my own," sighed the contessa, "do not forget what I have been to you; do not despise the truest love woman ever felt for man."

"I do not. You are foolish."

"No, I am not. I have done much for you. Think of the risk I ran in Naples. No one suspected that I was the brigand's wife."

"You speak the word as if it was a term of reproach."

"So it is," answered the contessa. "But I do not reproach you with it. All I say is that I have sacrificed my life to you, and I would lay it down at this moment to save yours."

"Perhaps you will have a chance soon."

"Soon?"

"Yes. All depends upon Bigamini."

"Why?"

"What a plague you women are!" cried Barboni, petulantly. "You are always asking a lot of questions, which it takes a man half his time to answer. Go to your tent; leave me."

"My place is by your side," she answered.

"What!" he cried, angrily, "am I to be disobeyed? Begone, madam. *Santo Dio!* I shall strike you."

"A man who strikes a woman is a coward," replied the contessa. "But strike me if you will. My love for you is so great that I would even bear that insult."

"Why do you irritate me?" he asked.

"Because an instinct warns me that you are threatened with danger. If I am near you, I may be able to save you; and if I could lay down my life for you, I should die happy."

"Cospetto!" cried the brigand. "Is this the time for sentimental nonsense? I tell you my mind is distracted with doubts and fears. Here, Florio, Camillo! Come hither."

Two men holding command among the brigands approached.

"Remove this lady to her tent," continued Barboni. "Let a sentinel be posted to see that she comes not forth to worry me."

The contessa drew herself up proudly.

"It is unnecessary," the contessa said, addressing Barboni, "to subject me to insult at the hands of your men. The Contessa Di Malefedi has fallen, but she has not sunk so low as to have lost all pride and self-respect. I go, nor will I trouble you again with my presence until the danger I can see before us calls me for the last time to your side."

"The last time?" repeated Barboni.

"Yes."

"What mean you?"

"My prophetic vision never deceives me; besides, the sybil cast my horoscope, and foretold that I should die to save the one I loved, and that my death would occur on my twenty-seventh birthday."

"How old are you now, Bianca?" asked the brigand, with a tenderness he had not before exhibited.

"I shall attain my twenty-seventh year to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated the brigand, starting as he spoke. "Did the sybil tell you that? She never prophesied falsely. Her keen insight into the future was always a marvellous mystery. She told you that, eh? Say it again. What was it?"

He spoke under the influence of great agitation.

His lips twitched convulsively, and his hands were tightly clenched, while his eagle eye rolled wildly.

Camillo and Florio were still in attendance.

"Back, hounds!" he cried, waving his hand fiercely. What are you doing there?"

"You called us, signor," replied Florio.

"Santa Maria!" cried Barboni, "do you dare to bandy words with me?"

Florio shrugged his shoulders.

"You stand there to listen to my conversation with this lady, insolent curs that you are! Cospetto! I am well served by such hogs."

"If it comes to that," replied Florio, colouring, "I am no more a hog than yourself."

A sharp cry came from the lips of the brigand.

With lightning-like rapidity he drew a reveolver from his belt, and, scarcely waiting to take aim, discharged a couple of shots at the unhappy Florio.

"Die, dog!" he said, with a heartless laugh, as he saw the brigand put his hand to his side and sink to the ground, which was soon ensanguined with the life-stream welling from a deep wound.

At the report of the pistol, the brigands who were lounging about looked up.

Florio was very popular with them.

A feeling of indignation pervaded every breast, and it was felt that Barboni was shameful by abusing his power.

Camillo retreated rapidly, fearing that his master's wrath might attack him next.

Several brigands crowded round him, to inquire the cause of the chief's anger.

"'Twas nothing at all," he said. "Florio had done nothing. Poverino! he was murdered."

Loud murmurs arose.

"Gently," said Camillo; "it is useless to provoke him further. He is mad. No one can tell whose turn it will be next."

"Well said," cried the brigands.

"For my part, I have had enough of it."

"And I."

"And I."

"And I."

"Friends," cried Camillo, "Barboni's time draws near. He is no longer the great brigand he was. Take my advice, and let us go."

"Where can we go? We are outlaws," said one.

"Have you not heard of the new brigand of Vesuvius—Toro by name, because he is a very Hercules? They say he stands eight feet high, is as big as a Colossus, and has the strength of a bull combined with the courage of a lion."

"Per Baccho!" said a brigand, "our worthy Camillo has spoken well."

"A Toro! a Toro! Down with Barboni!" cried the others.

"Hush!" said Camillo. "All who will leave Barboni and join Toro, follow me. I will guide you to his cave."

The whisper ran the round of the brigands.

Five-and-twenty at once rallied round Camillo. But fifteen remained faithful to their chief.

The seceders leisurely walked down the side of the mountain, led by Camillo, who had promised to take them to the cave of the new brigand named Toro, who had lately startled Naples by his atrocities.

Hunston had overheard part of the conversation, but he did not think it prudent to interfere.

He was much annoyed and alarmed at this serious lessening of their already small force.

During this episode, Barboni and the contessa had remained in conversation.

"I regret," she said, "that the witch foretold my death on my twenty-seventh birthday."

"And she said that you would die in defending me?"

"Those were her words."

"Strange," muttered Barboni. "I never knew the stars to tell her false. Had any other uttered this prediction, I should have disregarded it, but——"

He passed his hand over his brow, and paused abruptly.

"Am I to lose every one who is dear to me?" he said at length. "Friends I have none, nor did I ever care to make any. I have lost mother and son; now you, Bianca, my wife, are threatened by the hand of fate."

"Perhaps it is a delusion," replied the contessa, wishing to soften the poignancy of the anguish she saw he was suffering,

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barboni scornfully, as his mood changed. "am I going to play the woman? Santa Maria! am I not made of sterner stuff than that?"

"I hope so," said the contessa.

"Let fate do its worst — let fate rob me of all and make

me stand alone, I will show my enemies that Barboni's spirit is not crushed. To your tent, Bianca, to your tent! I am in no mood for talking to women to-day. Here comes Hunstoni, and from his face I should say he was the bearer of ill tidings."

The contessa smothered a sigh and retired to her tent, in the solitude of which she gave vent to a flood of tears.

Her gay career at Naples was cut short, and but that she loved the brigand chief, she had little left to live for.

The prediction of the sybil, that she should die on her twenty-seventh birthbay, in saving the life of Barboni, did not trouble her much.

There are times when the human mind is so overwhelmed with affliction, so stunned and numbed, as it were, that the near approach of death is not looked upon with any terror. In fact, death is hailed as a happy release from earthly suffering, and the hope of something better beyond the grave may become absolutely fascinating from its vagueness.

Hunston approached his chief with a downcast air.

"Well?" said Barboni. "You bring tidings of evil. Out with your news, man."

"Camillo has deserted," returned Hunston.

"Nay," laughed Barboni, "that is intelligence to make one merry. We have a discontented dog the less amongst us."

"He has taken with him five-and-twenty of our best men." "Then we shall have the less to keep. I had thought seriously of shooting a couple of dozen of them to-night. How many have we left now?"

"Not more than fifteen." "An excellent number for stopping a coach, or robbing a traveller," answered Barboni. "Suppose we are attacked by the soldiers?"

"If we can't fight, then we must run away. Does your courage fail you? If so, you are at liberty to depart, Signor Hunstoni. I shall not reproach you. Barboni will say no word, if you quit him in his hour of need."

"If you were successful and flourishing, I would leave you," replied Hunston, "for I am tired of this life, and want to get over to America, where I can enjoy a little peace and quietness with what money I have."

"Go, then," said Barboni, with dignity.

"No," answered Hunston, "I'll stick to you, now. You shall be able to say that you have one friend, at all events."

"I am grateful," said Barboni, shaking his hand.

"You know I am not a man of many words, but I am sincerely grateful, and I only pray that it may be in my power to show my gratitude."

And Hunston turned away.

Barboni's quick eye was roaming over the landscape.

"Ha! I see a form in the valley. Your glass. Quick!" he said, addressing Prosperi, one of his subordinates.

He placed the glass to his eye.

"Yes," he continued; "it is as I thought. Bigamini has returned from Naples."

"He holds something in his arms. He is successful," said Prosperi.

"Santissima Virgine?" exclaimed Barboni, "this is great news. Our position is not so bad as I thought."

A scrutiny enabled him to come to agree with Prosperi that the man below was no other than Bigamini, and that the latter held something in his arms, which in all probability was the child he had been dispatched to Naples to steal.

Jack Harkaway's only son.

Soon the shadowy form in the valley was lost to sight, and an anxious hour elapsed before he reached the brigands' camp.

When at length he came, he advanced at once to the chief, who had been rejoined by Hunston, and laid a bundle at his feet.

"Ha, my prince of spies," said Barboni, "what have you there?"

"Young Jack Harkaway, signor," replied Bigamini.

"Dead?"

"Alive, if I haven't overdosed him with chloroform."

The chief stooped down.

He undid the cloth that covered the child, who was breathing regularly.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "You shall have a purse of gold for this. Get ye to the cook, who has the carcass of a goat waiting at the fire. I'll wager you are both tired and hungry."

"Thank you, signor. I'll attend to the inner man first, for though I'm only a miserable Bigamini, I know what's good,

and the smell of that roast kid would make a hermit's mouth water."

The spy betook himself to that part of the camp where the cook was preparing the brigands' dinner, licking his lips as he went.

"Bianca," cried Barboni, whose voice, penetrating her tent, caused the contessa to come forward.

"Did you call me?" she asked.

"I did. Take this child under your care, and see that no harm happens to it."

The contessa took up the young one, who opened his eyes and stared about him, the effects of the drug given him by his captor having worn off.

"It is Mr. Harkaway's child," said the contessa in surprise; "I know him well. Often have I played with and given him sweetmeats. What is your object in bringing him here?"

"A free pardon from the government," answered Barboni.

"You will never get that."

"Then the child dies. I shall place my liberty and the child's life in the balance; Harkaway can choose which he likes."

"My pretty one," said the contessa, kissing the child with all the tenderness of a woman.

"I know you," replied the child. "You mamma's friend. Take me home, please."

"I can't to-night; you have come to stay with me."

"I want to go back to my mamma and my papa," said young Jack, kicking and struggling till she put him down on the ground, holding him by one hand.

"How old are you, my little man?" inquired Barboni, eyeing the child curiously.

"Me four and a half."

"Go with that lady, and you shall have some supper soon."

"I don't like you. I want my pa," answered young Jack; "my pa and I are going to kill Barboni."

The brigand smiled.

"It would have been well for your father," he muttered, "if he'd never got that craze into his head."

"Come along," said the contessa. "You and I will be good friends. Johnny, come to my tent."

"Do you live in a tent?" replied the child, interested

"I've got a lot of wooden soldiers at home and wooden tents; all I want is a drum and a trumpet. Have you got drums?"

"No, but I've got a nice little bed of leaves, and grass, and blankets."

"I don't want to go to bed. I want my tea; may I have some meat with my tea! I'm so hungry."

The contessa kissed him, and calling a brigand, sent him to the cook, from whom he presently returned with a smoking lump of goat's flesh on a wooden platter, a hunch of bread, and a jug of water.

After they had partaken of this meal, young Jack was easily induced to be put to bed, and the contessa, in her rich Italian voice, sang him off to sleep.

"Poor child," she said to herself, "what will his future be?"

Who could tell whether he would live to mingle with the world, or if his career was to be cut short by the rough and brutal men among whom the cunning and treachery of Bigamini had placed him?

Time alone would show.

CHAPTER LXII.

A PRESENT FROM BARBONI.

THE day after Bigamini's escape and the abduction of young Jack, saw the place in the Strada Di Toledo become a house of mourning.

Emily wept for her first-born, and would not be comforted.

The men were preparing for a journey to the mountains, with a troop of horse soldiers and a company of sharpshooters, who had sworn to exterminate the brigands once and for all.

Jack did not speak much. He went about like a ghost, making his preparations and talking to Monday, who was his chief adviser, while Emily was so ill as to be confined to her bed.

Clear-the-Track, the little coxswain, and Mr. Mole, were in Monday's pantry, which had become a favourite resort, it being handy for getting a glass of wine or a bottle of iced beer.

"My dander's regular up," said Sam. "I guess I shall

streak it along like wrath, when we start after the child, for it's right down dirty mean to go and steal a poor child that ain't accountable for his father's going on."

"If they'd taken Mr. Mole, it wouldn't have mattered," remarked the little coxswain.

"Thank you, Mr. Campbell," replied Mole. "My life may be as precious as a child's."

"Oh, Barboni don't steal lumber," said Sam.

"That's why he's let you alone, I suppose," retorted Mole.

"You old bundle of dried meat," said Clear-the-Track, "you're as ugly as a stone fence. So ugly are you, that I've got a pain in the eyes by looking at you."

"Don't, I beg of you, disturb the harmony of this little meeting by personal abuse. Be quiet, and pass the bottle," said Mole.

"You started it, and now you're looking at me as savage as a meat-axe. You're so mad, you're burning inside like a lime-kiln, and I wonder the smoke don't pour out of your nose and ears."

"You have a power of invective which I do not like to provoke," said Mr. Mole, "and I trust you will not trouble yourself to abuse me any more. If I say that I did not intend to offend you, having, as indeed I have, the highest possible respect for the smartness of your countrymen in general, and of yourself in particular——"

"Well, I'll dry up, but I guess you're right about being smart. My father was so tall, that he had to get up a ladder to shave himself, and we grow oysters so large, that it takes two men to swallow one whole."

Mr. Mole laughed so much at this, that Clear-the-Track asked him if he was going to take a fit.

"No," replied Mole, "but I'll take another glass after that, and I think if we were to send for some of the Fusari oysters, we should make sure of a good lunch."

Monday entered the pantry, and Mr. Mole asked him to go and fetch what he wanted, but the black seemed to be in a great state of excitement, for he just took up a bottle, and ran away again without making any remark.

"Something's up, I'll go my death on it," said Sam. "That's as sure as shooting, and I wouldn't wonder if the brigand's in it as usual."

"Go up stairs and find it out, some of you," said Mr. Mole, with his hand on the bottle.

"Don't you milk the cow dry while we're gone," said Sam.

"Mr. Clear-the-Track, you're very personal, and——"

"Do you want me to start in full blast again?" interrupted Sam. "I'll give you the jerks, if you want me to keep the thing warm and pot boiling, old hoss. You take my remarks without answering."

"I will," replied Mole.

"You're not the big dog of the tanyard now, and I've taken some trouble to show you what a little contemptible bug you are."

With another warning look at Mole, he followed Walter, who had already gone up stairs.

Mr. Mole gave him a look, which, if looks were fatal, under circumstances of extreme hatred, would have killed him on the spot.

"How I detest that empty-headed, chattering Yankee," muttered Mole. "I wonder if Monday would stick a knife into him, on a dark night, and rid me of him?"

The idea seemed to please him, for he chuckled over it, nodded his head, winked and washed his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water.

Jack and Harvey were reading a letter which did not seem to please them, and as Walter and Sam entered, Jack remarked—

"It is impossible I can consent."

"What is it, old man?" asked the little coxswain.

"A letter from Barboni."

"Has the oracle spoken?"

"Yes, and he says that he has my child and will only deliver him up on receiving a free pardon from the Italian government."

"By Jove! that's asking too much," said Walter.

"General Cialdini would do any thing in reason to oblige me, but this is out of his power," answered Jack.

"So I think," said Harvey. "The fact is, the government is resolved to put down brigandage, and Barboni is such a celebrated criminal that he must be made an example of, as a warning to others."

"The cruellest part of the letter is this," continued Jack. "I am threatened that I shall receive the poor child's ears in a basket if the pardon is not sent in three days; and if a further delay occurs. I am to shake hands with him in his absence."

"That means, he will cut off his hands," said Walter.

"It's a game all can win at," said Clear-the-Track, "and if we catch him, we'll see how he looks without his head."

"The death of ten Barbonis would not compensate me for the mutilation of my boy," replied Jack.

"I guess he's only done it to frighten us," said Sam, "and he's laughing a heap at the stew he's put us in."

Jack sat down and clenched his fists with impotent rage.

"Don't take on, we must keep a-pushing," continued Clear-the-Track. "You seem cut up, and look like me when I took my first bottle of soda water."

"How was that?" asked Jack.

"It took the breath clean out of me, my tongue felt as if it were full of needles, and my stomach as if I'd swallowed a pint of frozen soapsuds, while the tears ran out of my eyes like a mill stream."

"I feel worse than that," answered Jack.

"Go and show the letter to the general," said Harvey.

"What's the use?" said Jack. "He wouldn't pardon Barboni, and if he would, upon my word I don't think I'd let him. If ever a villain deserved to die, this infernal brigand does, and sooner than he should escape, I'll sacrifice my poor child."

A buzz of admiration ran round the room.

Jack had spoken like a hero, and each one present felt a tingling at the heart, as his fiery and noble words were spoken.

"Bravo! You're real grit," said Sam; "you've got energy enough to move a mud turtle. Stick to it like shoemaker's wax. Cheer up; we'll rescue the child yet. I'm not going to curse all creation, and cut my throat yet."

"Sam's right," said Harvey. "We must take the field again."

"Start to-night. We know Barboni's in the mountains, and if my life will help to save the child, Jack's welcome to it," remarked the little coxswain.

"And mine too. Barboni's not worth the consideration of a caterpillar," cried Sam. "I can see a gimlet hole for the light of hope to stream through. Whoop! we'll clear the track of such unconsidered trash. If Barboni thinks to frighten us, he might as well try to pull goose quills from the wings of an angel."

Jack sprang up.

"I can't sit here," he cried; "if I do, I shall go mad. Let us start at once. Harvey, go and order the soldiers to march as early as is convenient. They have their instructions; a troop of horse and a company of foot."

"Right," said Harvey.

"Walter, tell Monday to be ready to act as guide, though I think I know the way pretty well."

The little coxswain and Harvey started at once.

"Keep up your pecker," said Sam, patting Jack on the back.

"I try to bear up," answered Jack.

"It will all come straight, though it's in a darned tough tangle now. Somebody said—'Whatever is, is right, except a left boot and wanting to borrow money.' If Mr. Barboni thinks we're going to cave in, it's all my eye and Mrs. Elisabeth Martin."

Jack was amused at the cheerful rattle of Clear-the-Track Sam, and smiled in spite of his misery.

"There," continued Sam, "you're a sight better. My jaw does you good. Ain't I a beggar to talk? Once at home I talked a horse's hind leg off, and wore his tail down to a stump."

Mr. Mole entered with a bottle of wine.

"Harkaway," he said, "take a drop of this cordial; or would you prefer a sip out of my cask? I hear that the life of young Jack is threatened, and that you are about to take the field against the Philistine once more. You have my deepest sympathy."

"Thank you," replied Jack. "I have just had some brandy that Monday brought me, and I am sure if any thing could do me good it is the kind way in which all my friends have rallied round me."

"There is nothing like carrying a small bottle of sunshine under your shirt front," said Sam.

"I trust, Harkaway, that you will place me in the van to face danger, for I am well known as a valiant man and an able soldier," cried Mole.

"You a soldier?" said Sam.

"Certainly; I am a great fighting man."

"Oh, cut my straps, and let me go to glory," cried Clear-the-Track.

"I do not care for your sneers, and perhaps I shall soon have an opportunity of showing you how to kill brigands," replied Mole, with dignity.

"You'll cut your stick and absquatulate, that's what you'll do. I wouldn't give a tin sixpence for your bravery, nor a pewter shilling for your skill. You're a stuffed lion. Courage! Why, you haven't got enough to swear by."

Mr. Mole turned on his heel, and with an air of supreme contempt, quitted his tormentor, more than ever incensed against him.

That evening, after sunset, the friends quitted Naples once more for the hills, the orders of the officers commanding the soldiers being not to return until Barboni and his men were either killed or captured.

A couple of days' march brought them to the foot of the hills where Monday declared he had seen the brigands encamped, when he was lucky enough to rescue his master.

Sentinels were posted, tents pitched, and a regular camp formed, to serve as the base of operations.

Scouts were sent out, and Monday undertook a journey to reconnoitre, it being of no use to charge up the hill, when the leaders did not know if there was any enemy there to charge.

Towards nightfall, a soldier who had been on guard brought a basket to his commanding officer, saying a peasant had given it him for Signor Harkaway.

It was at once forwarded to a large bell-shaped tent, in which the friends had located themselves.

Clear-the-Track was playing on a banjo.

Mr. Mole was dancing on the grass, and singing a song.

Jack, the little coxswain, and Harvey sat looking on and applauding the comical exertions of the professor.

"Go it, Mole! That's a twister. You can do it, sir. The stage lost a good comic actor in you," cried Harvey.

Mr. Mole did a breakdown, and stopped amid great applause, the perspiration running down his face in streams.

"I think I deserve a drink after that," he said. "Where is my cask?"

At this moment the soldier came up with the basket, which was carefully covered over with vine leaves.

"For Signor Harkaway," he said saluting.

Jack got up, and removed some of the leaves, disclosing to view a piece of paper on which was written—

"With Barboni's compliments; another present to follow."

Jack trembled violently as he removed more leaves.

At the bottom of the basket, carefully placed on a piece of clean linen rag, were a pair of ears.

From their size, it was easy to see they belonged to a child.

A cry of agony and rage mingled broke from Jack.

"The villain has kept his word," he groaned.

It was true.

Barboni had evidently heard of the approach of the force sent to capture him, and his first act was to cut off young Jack's ears, which he sent in a basket to his father.

The friends were horrified at this barbarity.

Jack was completely overwhelmed, as he thought of the sufferings of the child, and the danger that still awaited him.

CHAPTER LXIII.

MONDAY HAS HIS DOUBTS.

THOUGH every effort was made to discover the retreat of brigands, the scouts did not meet with the success that their perseverance deserved.

Nor was Monday more successful.

Traces of encampments were found, but it appeared as if Barboni never stopped more than a few hours in one place.

He was continually changing his position, and by this means baffled his enemies.

Jack fretted and chafed with impatience at the slow progress they made.

Three days after the receipt of the ears by Jack, a child's hand was sent him in the same way. The brigand wrote thus—

"With Barboni's compliments. Mr. Harkaway is requested to shake hands with his child, who will be shot to-morrow if the troops do not return immediately to Naples.

"VI SALUTA BARBONI."

The receipt of this letter intensified Jack's horror. He felt sure that his firstborn was doomed to death.

At this juncture our friends received reinforcement in the person of Lord St. Clair, the cousin whom Carden, in his dying moments, had requested them to telegraph for to avenge his death.

St. Clair was tall, stout, and handsome.

He was one of those huge, bulky men, who combine great strength with magnificent physical proportions.

At the age of thirty, he was in his prime.

Arriving at Naples, and hearing that the friends were actively engaged in brigand-hunting, he at once proceeded to the front.

Jack and the others welcomed him very warmly, and gave him an account of Carden's death, which affected him deeply, as he had been much attached to his cousin.

"Blood for blood is my motto," said Lord St. Clair; "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—the old Levitical law, you know, and please God I'll avenge poor Tom's death. He shan't call on me in vain."

"We are all of one mind," replied Jack.

"I trust you have recovered your child," said Lord St. Clair.

"No, indeed. He is dead by this time," answered Jack, who told him of Barboni's atrocity.

"The cold-blooded monster!" ejaculated St. Clair.

"I am reckless now," replied Jack; "in fact I don't care for any thing. When I think of Barboni, a red mist comes before my eyes; I only see blood, and I will never rest until the scoundrel who has murdered my child is as low as he."

"Where is the brigand?" asked his lordship.

"That's what nobody knows," answered Harvey. "He's a sort of Will-o'-the-wisp, Jack-o'-Lantern kind of cove. He's about some where, but our scouts can't spot him."

"That wouldn't do for me," replied St. Clair. "I've just come back from the Western States of America, and——"

"What!" exclaimed Clear-the-Track. "Have you been to the States?"

"Yes."

"Have you been south as far as Masonville, in Texas, where I was raised?"

"I've been there," replied St. Clair.

"Do you know Snack-nasty Jim, and Boston Bob, and Pug-ugly Tom? Oh! scissors! ain't he ugly? Why, he's as old-looking as a blue pig with a saffron-coloured tail. Oh, my! I'm as happy as an oyster in June to meet you, stranger; let's feel your flesh."

He held out his hand, which the good-natured Englishman took with the same heartiness as it was offered.

"You and I'll have a palaver after a bit," he said. "At present I want to tell a bit of a story."

"Go on. I reckon I ain't so contemptibly mean as to stop you. We understand one another, and I reckon when you speak to me, you ain't talking Choctaw to a Chinaman," returned Clear-the-Track.

Lord St. Clair smiled, but was not surprised or offended at the volubility of the American, for, being a travelled Englishman, he had got rid of all that stupid pride of class which makes our stay-at-home noblemen so disagreeable and exclusive.

"Clear-the-Track," continued Sam, "it's as hard to make me dry up as it is to make a hen sit when she ain't in the humour for it, though I once broke a fowl's heart by giving her six china door knobs to sit on instead of eggs, and she very nearly busted herself a-trying to hatch that brood out. But I'm at it again, clear the track. It's all Mole's fault."

"No familiarity, if you please, sir," said the professor. "To my friends I am Mole. To you I am Mr. Mole, and I protest once more against being insulted by an American monkey."

"Oh, gosh! roll up!" cried Sam. "That's a crusher. Ain't he got my name pat? I'm a regular ring-tailed screamer."

"Will you let me tell my story?" asked Lord St. Clair.

"Clear the track; I've done," answered Sam. "I'm as short as pie-crust."

"In Kansas I went bear-hunting," said St. Clair.

"We walked for miles and could see no bear, but we found bear tracks, and that enabled us to track the grizzly to his den."

"You mean to say that we ought to find brigands' tracks," said Jack.

"That's it; and if any one will accompany me, I will see if I can't discover them."

The suggestion was a good one, but as Monday had failed in the very same attempt, Jack did not hope much from it, though he said nothing to discourage the new-comer.

Monday was constantly missing from the camp.

He made long journeys, and said nothing about them when he returned, though Jack questioned him once or twice.

All he would say was—

"Me not believe um child dead, sare."

"But," returned Jack, "how could he live with his poor hand cut off? Oh, he's dead enough. Curses on his murderers! The news will kill my wife."

"Monday go seek again, sare, and think him able to find um child."

Jack shook his head sadly, and Monday once more climbed up the side of the mountain.

It was a wild and stormy night.

All day long the heat had been oppressive.

Scarcely a breath of air stirred the atmosphere.

It was like being in a vapour bath.

But to Monday this made no difference, because he was used to just such a climate.

The lightning flashed.

The thunder rolled.

In the distance Vesuvius could be seen in a state of eruption, throwing up clouds of lava, stones and cinders.

At length the rain began to fall.

The parched and arid earth literally steamed as the rain fell on it, but Monday pushed on.

It was a night he could have wished for.

He had wandered over the mountains so often, that he knew his way about pretty well.

Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning followed by a deafening peal of thunder, caused him to stop.

Something brushed past him.

He grasped his knife more firmly, thinking he was near the brigand's hut, and another flash, which lit up the surrounding scenery, and made every object as clear as in broad daylight, showed him that the thing which had touched him was not a man.

It was a wolf.

The animal licked his hand, and it instantly occurred to him that it was the same one he had met in the sibyl's cave.

"Um Bigamini's wolf," he said, with a grin, as he thought of the night in the cave; "what um doing here?"

Stroking the creature's neck and head, Monday reflected.

The wolf had most probably followed Barboni to the mountains.

If so, the brigands were somewhere near.

Full of this idea, he sat down and waited for daybreak, while the wolf, who knew him again, lay like a dog at his side.

When the first streaks of rosy-tinged morn crimsoned the sky, Monday sprang up.

In a hollow, carefully concealed by nature and overhanging brushwood, he saw a column of smoke curling lazily upwards.

The wolf looked at him, as much as to say—

It is breakfast time, and I must go and join my friends."

Then he trotted off down the bank, and was lost to sight.

Creeping on his belly, Monday reached the side of the hollow, and looked down.

Below were two tents, and round them were grouped in picturesque attitudes the small band of men who remained faithful to Barboni.

"Um brigands!" said Monday joyfully. "Oh, Sally come up, won't Mast' Jack be pleased? It make um heart jump for um joy."

He remained watching for some time, but he could see nothing of the child, and at last, knowing how valuable time was, he reluctantly quitted the spot, and hastened to the plain below to give the glad tidings to the soldiers.

When he reached the encampment, he rushed at once to Jack's tent.

Breakfast was being prepared by Mr. Mole and Lord St. Clair, who was an old campaigner, and could make an omelette in the crown of an old hat if he hadn't a frying-pan.

Jack was boiling the kettle, while Harvey and the little coxswain, aided by Clear-the-Track Sam, laid the plates, cups, and saucers on the grass.

"Monday," said Jack, looking up.

"Yes, sare," replied the black; "um find um brigands. Come up hill quick, or p'r'aps um go like birds."

"Where are they?"

"'Bout two miles up."

"How many of them?"

"Not more than thirty. Couldn't see um all. Call um soldiers, sare."

"Did—did you see my child?" asked Jack, in a faltering voice.

"No, sare. Um not see young Mast' Jack, but there two tents and p'r'aps um child in one. Monday not have time to wait, cos might slip away."

All thoughts of breakfast were thrown to the winds.

The news flew like wildfire through the camp, and the men were under arms directly.

The cavalry remained in charge of the camp, as they could be of no use in the hills, and only the Bersaglieri were taken to the attack.

"This is great news," observed Mr. Mole, shouldering a rifle. "I wish Monday could have put off his arrival half an hour, though, as my belly cries cupboard, and I crave to break my fast."

He put some bread in his pockets to eat on the way.

The friends lighted their pipes, and marched with the soldiers gaily up the sides of the mountains.

Monday was the pioneer and led the way.

Not a sound was uttered, and everyone proceeded with the utmost caution, lest an alarm should be given, and the brigands, being warned, should succeed in making their escape through the many passes and defiles, with which they were well acquainted.

It was an anxious moment for Jack.

If the attack was successful, he would know if his dear child was alive or dead.

He determined to single out Barboni.

"One of us shall die to-day," he muttered through his clenched teeth.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE BRIGANDS AT BAY.

BARBONI knew from his spies that the English, with a large force of soldiers were after him.

This made him very cautious in his movements, and he continually shifted his position.

The prediction of coming danger made by the contessa was not verified, and he laughed at her fears.

It was a lovely morning, such as one can only see beneath the beautiful blue sky of Italy, which inspires poets and painters.

The contessa came from her tent.

Barboni was standing in the hollow where he had pitched his camp, leaning moodily upon a rifle, his eyes fixed upon

the ground and his mind engrossed with thought. The rustle of the contessa's dress roused him from his reverie.

"You are thoughtful," she said.

"I am tired of inaction," he replied, "and I burn to show these English that I have got the power and the will to work them harm."

"Would that we could retire in safety," she said.

"I expected that my threats about the child would induce Harkaway to listen to the terms I have proposed."

"And will he not?"

"He makes no sign," remarked Barboni, gloomily. "To-day I will move the camp nearer the plain, and if I see a chance of escaping, I will retire to Sicily, though I fear there is more safety in the mountains than on the coast, which, with the price set upon my head, is sure to be well guarded."

"You laughed at my prediction," said the contessa.

"Because you prophesied that you were to die on your twenty-seventh birth-day."

"It was the sibyl's prediction."

"No matter, the day is gone, and you are still alive."

"I find I made a mistake in the day," replied the contessa, with a shiver.

"A mistake?"

"Yes; my troubles have made me confuse dates. It is to-day that I am twenty-seven, and the shadow of death already encompasses me. When I am gone, should you think of me, make me a grave on the mountains where the sunbeams rest when they promise a glorious morrow."

"You will not die," replied Barboni, though his face showed that he was ill at ease.

He was of a superstitious nature, and his confidence in the prophetic power of the old witch, his mother, had always been very strong.

"Where is the child?" asked Barboni.

"He sleeps."

Suddenly the contessa turned her head, and uttered a loud cry.

The wolf that Monday had seen near the encampment, and which, being well known to the brigands, was allowed to stroll about at will, and eat up such scraps and offal as he could find, ran in at the opening of the tent in which the child was sleeping.

"The wolf! the wolf!" exclaimed the contessa.

"Where?" demanded Barboni.

She pointed to the tent, from which the wolf emerged bearing something in his mouth.

It was young Jack, who, alarmed at the attack of the wolf, clung tightly to the animal's neck.

The animal clambered up the bush-covered side of the pit, and made off with his prey.

Barboni raised his rifle to his shoulder.

But he hesitated to fire for fear of killing the child.

The momentary hesitation enabled the creature to escape with his precious burden.

"Curse the wolf!" said Barboni. "Santo Dio! what is the meaning of this?"

"The savage brute will kill the child," said the contessa.

"Away, there, a dozen of you! After the wolf, and bring back the brat alive or dead."

Several brigands began to ascend the side of the hollow in which they were camped.

The foremost one had scarcely reached the top of the enclosure, when a report was heard, and he fell back, throwing up his arms, and rolled a corpse at the feet of his comrades.

"Betrayed or surprised," cried Barboni. "Per Baccho! the soldiers are upon us. Back, for your life, Bianca, back!"

He had scarcely uttered the words, when the brow of the cliff was alive with enemies.

"Fire, idiots, fire! Pour in a volley, quick; or, cospetto! we die like rats in a pit," continued the brigand chief.

Hunston and his men were not slow in obeying this order.

An irregular volley was fired, followed by a steady discharge all along the military line.

Soldiers and brigands both fell fast.

The contessa threw herself before Barboni, heroically exposing her own life to save him.

In vain he strove to persuade her to fly.

"Seek the private pass," he cried; "you know it well; it will take you through the rock. If you love me, fly, Bianca!"

"No," she replied, bravely, "my place is at your side."

"This is madness," he replied, firing his revolver point blank at the soldiers who were swarming down the sides.

"This day will I fulfil my destiny," was the calm reply.

The English had been a little behind the soldiers in the first attack, but nothing could check their impetuosity when the firing began.

Harkaway and his friends poured down into the hollow.

Bullets flew wildly around them, but the fire of the brigands was beginning to slacken, and only a few remained alive and unwounded.

"Death to the brigand! Down with Barboni!" cried the little coxswain, who scrambled down amongst the furze and brushwood.

It was an exciting scene, though the vision was somewhat obscured by the cloud smoke proceeding from the powder, which now enveloped the hollow as if with a misty haze arising from a morning fog.

Barboni saw Walter hurrying toward him, and taking steady aim, discharged his pistol.

The bullet lodged in his leg, and with a cry of rage the little coxswain toppled heavily down, and lay helpless on the sward by the side of a dead brigand.

Jack was in the hollow first, and levelling a pistol, exclaimed, hoarsely—

"My child, villain—my child!"

The contessa placed herself before Barboni, and by so doing disarranged his aim, so that two bullets flew over Jack's head.

At the same moment Jack fired, in a frenzy of desperation, and the ball entered the breast of the contessa.

The prophecy was fulfilled.

Casting a glance of love at Barboni, her lips softly murmured the words—

"*Caro mio sposo!*"

She sank to the ground, her eyes closed, and all that was mortal of the beautiful and accomplished Contessa Di Malafedi had passed away for ever.

The brigand uttered a howl like that of a wild beast.

For years he had been secretly married to this woman, and he loved her.

It seemed as if every human being that he cared for was to be cut off and taken from him, until he stood alone in the world, like an aged tree stripped of all its branches, towering grandly in the forest with its gnarled and naked trunk.

He stifled his grief, and choking back a sob which rose unbidden to his lips, the man of blood and iron prepared once more to face his enemies.

His pistol was empty.

The seven chambers had been fired, and he had no time to load again.

The smoke cleared off slightly, and he got a glimpse of a head, at which he threw his pistol with crushing effect.

It was Harvey, who fell stunned.

Feeling for his sword, he drew it from the scabbard, and began to slash right and left.

"Vi saluta Barboni!"

His battle cry rang out loudly and proudly on the morning air.

"Hold on, and let them have it! I'm here," said Hunston.

"Back to back," replied Barboni.

Hunston placed his back against that of his chief, and they kept off all assailants.

"Vi saluta Barboni!" again cried the brigand.

"I'm a-coming, signor," said Bigamini. "You drop 'em, noble signor, and I'll stab 'em with my knife. Oh, ain't it getting jolly hot!"

The soldiers had been obliged to give up the hope of being able to shoot all the brigands, because the bravery of the English had induced them to storm the hollow.

If they continued to fire, they might kill friends as well as foes.

The bugle sounded—

"Cease firing."

Those up above could only guess what was going on below.

But they did not much care for the English, and if the latter chose to rush like demons to the attack, they might fight it out, for all the Italians cared.

The combatants in the hollow looked like a body of ghosts fighting amid sulphurous fumes arising from the bottomless pit.

Lord St. Clair found himself opposed to Hunston, while Jack and Barboni were making the sparks fly from their swords.

"Hullo, there! Who's who, and which is which? Clear the track! I'm on the grand rampage, and I guess it's a case of fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a brigand! And I'm going in some strong—rather!—a few!" exclaimed Sam.

He groped his way through the smoke, and stumbled over dead bodies at every step.

All the brigands, except Baiboni, Hunston, and Bigamini, had either fallen or were so alarmed at the surprise that they had run away.

"Help! help!" cried a feeble voice.

"Who are you?" asked Sam.

"A brigand's got me by the throat. It's Mr. Mole—help! I—I tumbled down the bank—help!"

Sam went on his hands and knees, and found the professor in the grasp of a wounded brigand, who was trying to find his knife to kill him.

But he had dropped it somewhere, which little accident had saved Mr. Mole's life.

The misty atmosphere began to lift now the firing had ceased.

Sam distinguished Mr. Mole from the brigand, and, clubbing his rifle, brought it down on the skull of the latter with a force that made the brains fly in all directions.

"Guess he's started for kingdom come, and hasn't got a return-ticket," he said, complacently.

Jack, meanwhile, had pressed the brigand hard, but the excitement from which he was suffering on his child's account seemed to unnerve him.

This gave Barboni an advantage over his opponent, which he was not slow to seize.

Making a feint, as if he would threaten his heart, he lowered his sword, and lunged at his leg, recovering immediately, and again menacing the vital part.

Jack had parried the thrust in carte, but the rapid recovery, and the lunge in tierce were too much for him, and Barboni's sword struck him in the side, glancing along the ribs, inflicting a flesh wound of a painful nature.

Wild with rage, and smarting with pain, Jack dashed boldly within the brigand's guard, and shortening his sword, plunged the point at his breast.

Thanks to the thick coat of chain mail which he always wore, the sword broke up into small pieces, as if it had been shattered against a block of iron, or like a piece of glass shattered to atoms against a brick wall.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Barboni; "I have you now."

He raised his sword, and prepared to plunge it into his heart.

All at once Hunston, who formed a support for his back, gave way, and this sudden release caused him to stagger back some steps.

"In the fiend's name" cried Barboni, "what are you about?"

"I'm wounded," replied Hunston; "my one arm's pierced. Fly; I can fight no longer."

"Retreat," said Barboni; "I will guard the rear."

Hunston went rapidly to a secret pass, the existence of which was not known to the enemy, and, preceded by Bigamini, reached it.

Lord St. Clair and Clear-the-Track Sam contested every inch of ground with the brigand, who fought with a skill, a nobleness, a calmness, which commanded their admiration in spite of their hatred for the man who, from his crimes, was to them a detestable monster.

When he neared the secret pass, the brigand exerted all his skill, and, with a sudden twist of the wrist, disarmed Lord St. Clair.

At the same time he dealt him a blow on the temple, which brought him senseless to the ground.

Then he flung his sword at Sam, who, struck in the chest, rolled over and over in a very undignified manner.

Stooping down, the brigand seized the insensible body of Lord St. Clair in his arms.

Carrying him as if he had been a baby, he darted into the secret pass.

Hunston was awaiting him.

"Close the pass!" he exclaimed.

"I can't. My arm is useless. Curse Harkaway to all eternity or making me a cripple," he said, savagely.

"Where is Bigamini?"

"Here, noble signor."

"Take this man, quick," said Barboni.

The burden was transferred to the spy, and the chief put his shoulder to a loose block of stone poised on a shelf.

It had been placed there for the purpose of blocking the pass.

Very heavy and massive was it.

For a time it resisted all the exertions of Barboni to dislodge it.

Loud and fierce cries rang in his ears.

"After him! after him!" cried Jack, who had recovered from the momentary faintness caused by his wound. "The murderer of my child shall not escape."

Clear-the-Track had picked himself up, and ran towards the rocky pass.

"I guess he's a gone 'coon," he said.

But just as Sam, with Jack after him, had reached the mouth of the pass, which formed a secret outlet to the enclosure, Barboni made a prodigious effort.

The stone fell and blocked the entrance.

Jack and Sam stood blankly regarding this impediment to their further progress.

"Snakes!" said Clear-the-Track, scratching his head, "that's a settler. I reckon we were just a whisper too late."

Jack clambered up the side of the hollow to urge the commander of the soldiers to go in pursuit.

Seeing that the brigands were defeated, the officer sent his men in detachments to scour the country.

Jack returned to the hollow, which was now free from smoke, and was able to see the extent of the damage done.

The brigands had fought well and bravely; not one had attempted to escape, as five-and-twenty dead and wounded men testified.

As many as thirty soldiers had fallen, which showed that the resistance had been a desperate one.

Among the wounded, Jack found the little coxswain, who was swearing terribly over the ball which had lodged in his leg.

Monday had fallen early in the fight, with a contusion on the head, caused by a blow from the butt end of a rifle.

Lord St. Clair was carried off by the retreating brigands.

Harvey had received some ugly knocks and bruises.

Mr. Mole, recovered from his fright, was strutting about like a hen that has just laid an egg, and was equally vain-glorious.

The body of the contessa, bathed in blood, was on the grass.

Jack, however, had no time to pay attention to all the melancholy objects that met his gaze.

He had but one thought in his mind, and that was to search for his child.

The tents were explored, and every part of the encampment searched, without any result.

Young Jack was not to be found.

No one was there to tell him that the boy had been carried off by the wolf, and he came to the conclusion that he was dead.

Barboni had sent him a pair of ears and a child's hand as a present, and he could not help thinking that his darling was no more.

Sitting down, regardless of the pain of his wound and the faintness caused by the loss of blood, Jack gave himself up to his grief.

He dared not go home to Emily, and say that their boy was dead.

Such an announcement, in Emily's state of health, would most likely prostrate her to such an extent, that she would never be able to recover from the shock.

"I'll hunt him to the death," said Jack. "It shall be life for life."

Being a brave man, and one not accustomed to go to sleep when there was any thing to be done, Jack got up and tied a scarf tightly round his bleeding side, which, though stiff and painful, did not represent any internal injury.

Mr. Mole approached, and said—

"Safe and sound, I hope, Harkaway, after this fearful combat?"

"The villain has escaped, sir, and I am in doubt about the fate of my child," replied Jack. "That's what worries me."

"We shall soon capture him. After this defeat, the fellow must be on his beam ends, as we used to say when we were at sea," answered Mole.

"Yes," said Jack, smiling grimly. "We have cut his claws, but he alone knows the secret of my child, and in addition to that, he has carried off our ornament to the peerage."

"Nonsense!" said Mole. "Is Lord St. Clair a prisoner?"

"He was carried off before my face, and I couldn't stop it."

"Dear me! It is a pity I was so busy in another part of the field, or I certainly should not have allowed it. Really, Harkaway, I shall have to kill the brigand, after all. You youngsters seem to let him do as he likes with you."

Jack turned crossly away.

Those who had been wounded were carefully attended to, carts were procured, and they were conveyed back to Naples.

Clear-the-Track Sam, Jack, and Mr. Mole, remained encamped in the hills.

Barboni, Hunston, and Bigamini, were the only ones left out of the brigand's large band to oppose them.

It was three to three.

An equal match.

They took possession of the empty encampment lately occupied by the brigands, and receiving a store of provisions, determined to keep the ground.

"If we can't render an account of Barboni and his one-armed lieutenant, it's a pity," said Clear-the-Track.

"I have no fear of not running him to earth, sooner or later," answered Jack. "But I am so cut up at the loss of my boy. I wouldn't have lost the little fellow for the world. He was such a beauty."

"That's the simple truth," remarked Mr. Mole. "And as his tutor, I ought to know his worth, and I unhesitatingly declare that the boy was a prodigy."

"I don't know what a prod—what did you say?" asked Sam.

"Prodigy, sir. It is a term which——"

"Never mind what it is. I say the boy was a cock, a little stunner, and I never will believe he's dead. He's hidden away somewhere."

"I wish to goodness I could think so," replied Jack.

"You go to sleep on it, and you'll think better of it in the morning," replied the American. "I'll go and nose about a bit with a rifle. The thundering thieves aint' far off, I'll bet a hat."

Clear-the-Track Sam shouldered the rifle.

"Barboni fought well," he observed.

"Yes. I'll give him credit for that," replied Mr. Mole.

"You, sir!" said Jack. "Why, you never were near him."

"I fought with him, Harkaway, for fifteen minutes, by my watch, only you didn't see me in the fog."

"Ah, the fog was thick," said Sam, with a wink.

"No, no, Harkaway," continued Mr. Mole, "give me credit for what I do. Go to sleep, as our Yankee friend recommends, and I will have a quiet pipe and a pull out of my cask."

He unslung his cask, while Jack crept into a tent and threw himself on some blankets.

Sam started on an exploring expedition, and all was still.

The dead and wounded alike were gone.

All that remained to remind the observer of the bloody scene which had recently taken place were the cartridges lying about, the now useless rifles and pistols. a few articles

of clothing, and the clotted blood, festering in the rays of the burning sun.

Mr. Mole soon fell into a happy state.

He had seated himself in a shady spot, and what with whisky and tobacco, he quickly dozed off.

He woke up with a start, fancying there was someone about the camp.

"This won't do," he muttered, rubbing his eyes.

Before him was a strange animal with his nose on the ground.

Looking again, he saw it was a wolf, who was engaged in the congenial occupation of licking up the blood which crimsoned the ground.

"Hi! get out, you beast. Be off!" said Mr. Mole, clapping his hands.

The wolf gave a leap and was rapidly out of sight.

"Curious things, wolves," muttered Mr. Mole, applying himself once more to the flask.

There was an audible gurgle as the spirit went down his throat.

"Curious things, brigands," he continued. "Wonder what the next move will be. Very curious things, wolves—funny things, brigands—hic—bother this whisky, it'sg one the wrong—hic—way."

A violent fit of coughing stopped the current of his remarks, and when he recovered himself he went to sleep again, murmuring—

"Curious things, brigands—hic—very curious things—hic—wolves—hic."

CHAPTER LXV.

TORO, THE GIANT.

BEATEN, but not conquered, the brigand chief retreated to the plain by passes only known to himself.

Hunston followed him in a dejected manner, for the defeat they had suffered and the destruction of the band, added to the suffering caused him by his wound, had caused his spirits to sink very low.

Lord St. Clair was given into Bigamini's charge, and the latter had bound the arms of his captive with a rope behind

his back, keeping hold of one end of the rope to prevent him running away, and prodding him with the point of a sword as drovers goad oxen on the road to market.

"Hold up there!" he would exclaim if his prisoner stumbled. "Gee up! now then, stupid, what are you at? I'll teach you the rule of three."

Each sentence would be accompanied by a prick, which the wretched young nobleman was unable to resent.

All that day they travelled, obtaining refreshments at labourers' cottages by the roadside.

For these, all three were well able to pay, as each had a very large sum of money in gold, notes and jewels, fastened in an indiarubber belt, tied round the waist, under his other clothes.

This money was the result of successful brigandage.

Barboni had nearly twenty thousand pounds, Hunston ten, and Bigamini nearly two thousand.

The river was crossed by Barboni, who was too prudent a man to linger in the vicinity of his defeat.

Round the base of Mount Vesuvius the region, in parts, was very wild and desolate.

Here he determined to seek an asylum for a time.

It was night when they came to the end of their journey, and Lord St. Clair was ready to sink to the earth with fatigue.

The others, being more hardy and accustomed to privation and exposure, did not feel the weariness that oppressed him, though they too were glad of a halt.

Stars innumerable studded the heavens, and the crescent moon shone on the fair scene.

Vineyards were all around, and the smiling country lay wrapt in a calm repose, which gave the beholder little idea of the volcanic dangers lurking beneath their feet.

At times fitful gleams of flame shot up from the crater.

Vesuvius had been very unquiet of late, and had given many symptoms of erupting, which, accompanied by shocks of earthquake, had alarmed the population of the surrounding country.

But they, accustomed to those manifestations, shrugged their shoulders, hoping that nothing more serious than usual would happen.

At the foot of the mountain was a house made of blocks of lava, half hidden by vines and climbing plants.

This was scarcely perceptible to an ordinary observer, though well known to Barboni and Hunston, as they had erected it as a refuge when in that part.

It was the custom of the brigands to make little resting places of this sort in various localities to serve as asylums in case they were hunted about and driven.

In these rude huts or shanties, which were respected by the peasants, owing to their fear of the brigands, they kept a supply of potted and tinned meats, so that they were always sure of finding provisions.

In addition to this, they buried jars of wine and spirits in the earth, marking the spot so as to know where to dig for them when wanted.

"Here we are," said Hunston.

"Time enough too," growled Barboni, "Bigamini."

"Si, signor," returned the spy.

"Fasten the prisoner to a tree and set about getting some supper. It is quite fourteen hours since I broke my fast."

"Same here, governor," muttered Bigamini, as he proceeded to bind Lord St. Clair to the nearest tree.

Barboni approached the hut and drew back with a cry of surprise.

There was a light burning inside, and the sound of men's voices singing a rude chorus reached his ears.

"Diavolo!" he cried; "what is this?"

He approached the door and fearlessly flung it back, expecting to find a party of peasants carousing.

But his surprise was great when he discovered half a dozen armed men, who sprang to their feet with fierce oaths at beholding the intruder.

Pistols were levelled at his breast, and his retreat was cut off.

Calm and majestic as usual in the midst of danger, he uttered his famous cry—

"Vi saluta Barboni!"

At the sound of that magic name, the men lowered their weapons and their leader stepped forward.

He was a huge giant of a man, standing nearly eight feet high, and stout in proportion.

In his right hand he held a large club, made out of the root of a tree, weighing half a hundredweight.

He seemed to be a veritable Orson, or wild man of the woods.

His hair was long, shaggy as a goat's, and unkempt. Over his shoulders he wore a sheepskin, and a rough leather belt contained pistols and daggers.

"Who are you?" demanded Barboni.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the giant, whirling the club round his head as a Tipperary boy might a shillelagh at Donnybrook Fair. "That is a nice question to come from you."

"I am a brigand, and you are in my house," replied Barboni.

"So are we all brigands, for that matter, but why you should call this your house, *cospetto!* is more than I can tell."

"I built it."

"Santissima Virgine! can you be the great brigand?"

"Vi saluta Barboni!" was the calm reply.

"If you are Barboni, I'll make you heartily welcome, for I am treading in your footsteps. My name is Toro."

"I have heard of you," replied Barboni; "you are the new brigand who has lately established himself at the base of Mount Vesuvius."

"The same."

"Well met. Your hand."

The giant held out his enormous palm, which Barboni shook heartily.

"Come in and welcome," said Toro. "I little thought I should have the honour of entertaining so illustrious a brother."

"In his own house, too," said Barboni.

"Per Baccho, if it is your house, it is a pity you did not furnish it better," replied the giant.

"What fault have you to find with it?" asked Barboni.

"There are neither chairs, tables, eatables or drinkables."

"That is because you do not know where to find them. Presently I will supply your wants. I am hunted and driven."

"Cospetto!"

"The Bersaglieri have destroyed my band this morning. I am a fugitive, tired and weary. If you will receive me, well and good. If not, I am in no position to enforce my demands, and will go elsewhere."

"*Amico mis,*" said Toro, "you shall do no such thing. What I have is yours; my band is small; I have as yet but five followers, but they shall shed the last drop of their blood for you. Eh, my lads?"

A clapping of hands followed, and a general murmur of assent arose from all the brigands assembled.

Barboni bowed his acknowledgments.

"How many men have you left?" asked Toro.

"My lieutenant and a spy, who has charge of a prisoner, an Englishman."

Deep groans were heard.

"I hate the English," said Toro. "They have hunted you down, which is what our own countrymen never would have done, and it is a burning shame to see a splendid brigand like yourself in disgrace."

"Not in disgrace," replied Barboni, proudly. "I have been beaten by numbers, owing to a surprise, but we made a good stand, and I believe that for each of my men who fell, the enemy lost double."

"Pardon me," said the giant. "I made use of a wrong term."

"Let us have meat and drink," replied Barboni, "and you shall do what you like with the English prisoner."

"Viva Barboni! viva! viva!" cried the brigands.

Hunston had been standing at the entrance to the hut, with his hand upon his pistol ready for any emergency.

He was faint and weak from loss of blood, and entering the hut, sat down among the brigands, who made room for him.

"Bigamini," said Barboni, in a loud voice, "dig up the wine and spirits; you know where they are hidden."

While the spy was engaged in this congenial occupation, the chief rolled away a block of lava, and disclosed to view a choice assortment of meats in tins, which were eagerly pounced upon by Toro and his men.

After a good meal, which was washed down by copious draughts of wine, the brigands set a watch and retired to rest, throwing themselves on the ground in their long cloaks, and sleeping as soundly as if they had been in bed. Barboni, Hunston and Bigamini were thoroughly worn out.

As for Lord St. Clair, he was utterly forgotten.

It was enough for the brigands that he was secured, and they cared little or nothing for his comfort.

He could not sleep in the uncomfortable position in which they had placed him, and longed ardently for the approach of his friends, whom he hoped were coming in search of him.

Vain hope.

Willingly would Harkaway have followed on Barboni's track, but he had not the slightest idea which way he had gone, while Clear-the-Track Sam was hunting about the mountains, where Barboni had left no trace behind him.

During the night Vesuvius became very active.

Great clouds of ashes and stones were thrown up, the earth quaked, and a rumbling noise like distant thunder warned all those in the vicinity that an eruption on a large scale was imminent.

Lord St. Clair could not help admiring the magnificent spectacle presented by the burning mountain, which stood out clearly against the bright sky.

At length his head fell wearily on his shoulder and his eyes closed.

He thought of home, of his proud position, his prospects in life, all blighted by a miserable brigand.

But for this he would not have cared so much had not his capture prevented him from avenging the death of his cousin.

Carden's dying request was that he should come over to Naples and slay Barboni.

Fortune had been against him.

He was a prisoner, and, as yet, Tom Carden was unavenged.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS.

TOWARDS daybreak small streams of burning lava descended the sides of the mountain.

These gradually increased in size and strength, until they became formidable.

The sentinels saw the gleaming lava coming towards them.

It was time to raise the alarm.

Toro was first roused, and the others soon followed them from the hut to gaze upon the fiery mountain, down whose sides was pouring the insidious lava.

The crater was in full blast, and the sight was grand in the extreme.

Barboni gazed at it with his arms folded.

"We must move from this spot," he exclaimed.

"What!" replied Toro. "Are you afraid of a little lava? Why, I have seen it worse than this, and ascended to the top without danger."

"Nay," said Barboni, "'tis not that; but the spectacle always attracts a number of people from Naples, and we shall have those accursed English down upon us."

"Ah, that is true, and it reminds me of your prisoner. What do you say—shall we finish him off before we leave the hut?"

"As you please," returned Barboni, carelessly.

"Who is he?"

"I have not questioned him."

"But you talk the heretics' language. Question him now," said Toro.

Barboni ordered Bigamini to bring Lord St. Clair before him, which he immediately did.

The young nobleman was unabashed, and returned the stare of his enemies boldly.

"Who are you?" asked Barboni.

"A peer of England," was the answer.

"Your name?"

"Lord St. Clair."

"What was your object in attacking me, when I had done you no harm?"

"I wished to avenge the murder, by you, of my cousin—Mr. Carden—and I am sorry I did not succeed."

"So am I, for your sake," sneered Barboni. "Your cousin bearded me once too often, and has gone to—well, we will say Paradise; and you will very shortly follow him."

Turning to Toro, he added—

"Do what you like with the English hound."

"Throw him into the lava, and let him boil in it," said Toro, whose savage nature exulted in such a ferocious sentence.

In spite of his natural courage, Lord St. Clair trembled when he heard his doom.

The lava was flowing almost at their feet in a liquid, hissing, smoking, boiling stream.

It was an awful fate.

Bigamini seized him by one arm, saying—

"Come on. You've had your coffee. Make room for the next gentleman."

Turning to Barboni, St. Clair said—

“Do you call yourself a man, and will you sanction this crime?”

“Your life was forfeited when you attacked me,” answered Barboni. “I did not make myself your enemy. It was your act. What harm had I done you personally, that you should thirst for my blood?”

“You killed my cousin, Carden.”

“In fair fight. He attacked me. True, I am a brigand, but what harm had I done to any of these Englishmen?”

“To the lava! to the lava!” cried the brigands, fiercely.

“Have you no heart?” asked St. Clair.

“My heart is hard as iron,” replied Barboni.

“Spare my life. You can have any money you wish for as ransom.”

“I am in no humour to spare lives. What pity would you have had upon me, if your attack had been successful and you had captured me? It would have been ‘To the scaffold with him!’”

The brigands were growing impatient at this conversation. Again their voices rang out on the morning air—

“To the lava! to the lava!”

“Very well,” replied Lord St. Clair; “you shall see that I know how to die.”

“Take him away,” was Barboni’s only remark.

Bigamini pushed him along, until the edge of the stream was reached, when he gave him a violent kick, which sent him on his hands and knees into the flood.

The agony was so great that his lordship burst his bonds.

He uttered an awful cry, and taking up the burning lava in his hands, he cast it at Barboni.

The molten stuff struck him in the upper part of the face, and filled his eyes.

It was now the brigand’s turn to cry out.

“Shoot him!” he said; “shoot him! He has blinded me.”

“Ha!” cried Lord St. Clair; “Carden is avenged. Thank God for that one mercy.”

The next moment the rifles rattled as they were raised to the shoulders.

A report was heard, and the unfortunate young nobleman fell riddled with balls into the liquid fire which enveloped him.

He was dead !

Barboni was suffering the most acute agony, for the lava had entered his eyes and so burnt the pupils that his sight was gone for ever.

"Blind—blind !" he cried, clutching at the air with his extended hands.

The brigands shrank back, appalled at this sudden catastrophe.

"Blind—blind !" was all that the once famous and dreaded chief could say.

It was a terrible retribution for all his crimes, as to be blind is a living death, for the blind man is dependent upon others ; he can no longer help himself.

He cannot see the pleasant faces of his friends, nor the frowning brows of his foes.

Neither can he behold the smiling country ; all is a desolate blank to him, from which he cannot emerge until he reaches the other side of the grave.

Running about frantically, he continued to exclaim in accents of terrible lamentation—

"Blind, blind ! Oh, God, I am blind !"

To a man of his habits and life, blindness was the most awful punishment which could have befallen him.

Rather would he that death had come to him at once.

Toro and his men were bewildered at what had happened, so much so that they could scarcely believe it was true.

Hunston took the hand of his chief and led him into the hut, where he applied oil to his eyes.

All Barboni could utter was, in a moaning voice—

"I have lost my sight ! Blind, blind !"

"You will be better soon, I hope," replied Hunston. "In the meantime you are among friends."

"I would rather die than live like this. Oh, my punishment is more than I can bear. Promise me you will not leave me, Hunston, until I know the worst."

"I promise," said Hunston.

"You must get a skilful doctor to come and look at me. Say I am a poor peasant who has met with an accident, but who has a few ducats to pay him with. If there is no hope, I will not live. Oh, Holy Virgin, how my eyeballs burn !"

Toro and his men went out to stop travellers, expecting a rich harvest, as many people came out from Naples to look at the burning mountain.

Hunston departed in search of a doctor, not sorry to have to make the journey, because his wounded arm required dressing.

Barboni, the once haughty chief, was sadly reduced now, for he was as helpless as a child.

He sat in the corner of the hut, bewailing his fate, and gnashing his teeth as the anguish caused him by his eyes forced deep groans from him.

The spy remained as his servant, but his respect for his master had died out.

He felt a sort of contempt for this blind man, who was so far dependent upon others as to ask for a drink of water.

"Come here," exclaimed Barboni; "I want to talk to you."

"Do you?" answered Bigamini, insolently; "then you will have to wait."

"Ha!" roared Barboni, with his old impetuosity, "I will put a bullet through your rascally carcass if you dare to be insolent to me."

"Fire away; you can't see to hit me."

With trembling hands the brigand seized a pistol which was stuck in his belt, and discharged it in the direction from which the spy's voice had proceeded.

But Bigamini had quickly removed his position, and glided stealthily up to his master, knocked the pistol out of his hand, and struck him with his open hand on the cheek.

"Take that," he said. "If I am a miserable Bigamini, I am not going to stand your foolishness."

"Santo Dio!" cried Barboni. "Has it come to this? Have I really fallen so low? Is my depth of degradation, shame, and helplessness such that I am to brook blows and insults from a contemptible worm, who a short time back trembled at my nod?"

"You'll have to put up with a good deal more than that if you sauce me," answered Bigamini.

"I will complain to Toro of you; he is noble and generous, and will have you punished."

"Toro's not such a fool as to listen to a helpless animal like you," sneered Bigamini. "You're not the man you used to be. What's the good of you since Lord St. Clair blinded you?"

"Ah, Heaven! I am indeed fallen, since this fellow mocks and gibes at me thus."

"Take it easy and be civil, or I'll get a stick and keep you quiet," continued Bigamini, who, like all little cowards, was always a bully when he got the chance.

"Well, well," said Barboni, controlling himself with an effort, "I will try to be humble, since it is your wish, and I am, as you say, powerless. Give me some wine and water, good Bigamini."

"That's civil; I don't mind waiting on you, when you speak sensibly, like that. Only don't think you're going to ride over me now. Things is altered, I tell you; I'm master now."

Barboni groaned in agony of spirit, but made no further remark, taking the drink silently.

There he sat for hours.

Retribution, which always dogs the heels of evil-doers, had been overtaking him with giant strides of late.

In the afternoon Bigamini got restless.

"I shall go out for a bit," he said to himself. "That groaning fool gives me the hump."

Quitting the hut, he soon reached the road, along which several people were walking, attracted from Naples and the surrounding villages by the magnificent spectacle of Vesuvius in eruption.

He had not gone far before something fell heavily on his head, knocking his hat over his eyes, and before he could extricate himself, his hands were tightly bound behind his back.

"What the deuce are you up to?" he exclaimed, in a rage. "Drop it, whoever you are! Turn it up, I say, and look sharp."

"I'll drop you, if you're not quiet," replied a voice which made him tremble. "Oh, to think that I should have the luck to find you again, all through taking a walk to look at Vesuvius a-burnin' just like a mill shaft chimney afire."

"Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, "I've been a-looking for you ever since our last pleasant meeting."

"Oh, you story!" answered the woman, for it was his wife who had caught him; you never did no such thing. You've been along of brigands, and there's a reward out for you."

"You won't give me up, Sarah Ann?"

"That's what I will do. I'll see you hanging on the scaffold, and then I'll go home and forget I ever knew such a 'orrid wretch as you."

"Lift up my hat, sweetest of thy sect, that I may gaze upon your lovely countenance once more. Oh, angelic being! what bliss is mine to meet my darling Sarey Ann once more!" exclaimed Bigamini, in his most wheedling and flowery tone.

"You're a 'umbug—that's what you are!" said Mrs. Smiffins, complying, however, with his request.

"I'm a happy Smiffins once more," he continued. "This is more than I deserve. I've got money, my dear, and I'll go home with you to enjoy it. All shall be yours.. Every lire is for you."

"You don't get over me," answered Mrs. Smiffins, with a shake of the head. "I know 'I'm a young girl from the country, but you don't get over me.' I've got you, and I'll keep you. Come along of me, and be handed over to the first police we see."

"If it must be so, it must, hard-hearted fair. But ere we go, grant one request."

"Well, what is it? No tricks, now."

"My money is buried close by here. I should like you to have it."

"I don't mind that. It ain't likely to be any use to you, so I may as well take it to start me in business again when you're gone."

CHAPTER LXVII.

MRS. SMIFFINS MAKES TOO SURE.

"COME on, Sarey Ann. I will make atonement for the past," said Bigamini. "Let me lead the van."

"Is it far?"

"Up this rocky path. I go first and you can follow. Oh, Sarey Ann, ain't you hard-hearted!"

He began to whimper, and the tears fell from his eyes, but his wife paid no attention to him.

She knew him too well by this time to put any faith in his tears, and kept her eye fixed upon him, fearful lest he should play her some trick and get away, as he had often done before.

Little Bigamini was as slippery as an eel, and as difficult to hold, as all had found out who had had anything to do with him.

Bigamini took his wife some distance up the side of Vesuvius, where there was no danger from the streams of molten lava.

Having gained the top of a small plateau, fringed with stunted shrubs and trees, he paused.

Below the edge of the plateau was a fall of over thirty feet.

Pretending to search at the foot of a tree, he uttered a cry of alarm and despair.

"What is the matter?" asked his wife.

"Oh, Sarah Ann," he exclaimed, "some brigand's been and dug up all my money!"

"Is it gone?"

"Every ducat. I have been watched and robbed."

"I wish to goodness," said Mrs. Smiffins, "that you hadn't brought me up this plaguey hill on a wild-goose chase. I've trodden on stones and such-like till my feet ache."

"It's as bad for me," replied Bigamini.

"What does that matter? I'm going to give you up to the police as a brigand, and then I shall go home—but not till I see you executed."

"Sarah Ann, do you want to get rid of me?" asked Bigamini, gravely.

"Haven't you wanted to get rid of me this ever so long?" she inquired.

"Ah, I see how it is. You wish to marry the snob who lived next door to us in the Lower Marsh, Lambeth."

"He's a respectable shoemaker, and I don't know that we shan't make a match of it."

"Why didn't you commit bigamy, as I did?"

"Because I'm not such a fool, and I ain't as bad as you are. If it hadn't been for your treatment of me, I shouldn't have thought of the shoemaker."

"Look here, Sarah Ann," said Bigamini, "I know I've behaved cruel to you, but it ain't worth while to take the trouble to have me executed."

"Why not?"

"Do it yourself?"

"How?" asked Mrs. Smiffins, rather puzzled to understand his meaning.

"I'll stand on the edge of this plateau," said Bigamini. "My hands are tied and I can't help myself."

"Well?"

"You come and shove behind, over I go—break my precious neck. You go home and marry the shoemaker in the Lower Marsh, and there's an end of it."

"It isn't a bad idea, not by any means," remarked Mrs. Smiffins, reflectively.

"Are you on?"

"Of course, I ain't got no love for you now, only hatred and despisal," said Mrs. Smiffins.

"I know that. Oh, ain't I just a miserable Bigamini? — that's all. But it serves me jolly well right."

"You ought to have gone straight with me."

"Very true. It's too late now, ain't it?"

Mrs. Smiffins shook her head gravely, to intimate that it was, and that she would have nothing more to do with him on any terms whatever.

"Wipe away a tear, Sarah Ann," said Bigamini.

"Where?"

"In my right heye. I can't help a-thinking of what has been."

Mrs. Smiffins said—

"Stuff! You couldn't shed a tear if you tried to. It's all your 'umbug."

"Very well; a 'ard 'art will have its punishment. Shove away a good un," replied Bigamini, walking to the edge of the cliff.

"Are you ready?" asked his wife.

"Wait a minute. I want to say a prayer."

"Look sharp. I'm coming when I've counted twelve."

Bigamini turned his head round and watched her as she said—

"One, two, three, etc.," and his twinkling little grey eyes watched her every movement.

"Eleven; make haste!" she exclaimed.

"I've done," he answered.

"I'm a-coming. Twelve! Stand well over."

"Right. Lord ha' mussy," said Bigamini.

His wife ran at him with her arms outstretched, fully intending to push him over the edge of the rock.

As she approached her pace quickened.

Just as she was prepared to touch him, he stepped nimbly on one side, and missing her aim, she was unable to stop herself and tumbled over instead of her husband.

The branch of a tree which projected over the precipice,

caught her clothes, and she hung by it, dangling in the air, kicking her legs frantically, and screaming as if she thought she could save her life by making as much noise as possible.

Bigamini grinned.

He looked down at his struggling, screaming, panting better half, and his eyes twinkled again like beaming stars.

"Save me! save me!" said Mrs. Smiffins.

"You didn't do it that time, my dear," he replied.

"Save me!"

"I can't; though much I wish, for you have tied my hands," said Bigamini, in a tuneful voice.

"Wretch, you did it on purpose."

"Of course I did, my dear. I'm quite as anxious to get rid of you as you are of me, and I couldn't afford to let you have the best of it. How do you feel, my love?"

"Brute, help me up. I'll give it you else."

"Can't, my dear. Doesn't that branch feel insecure? You're a good weight, you know."

In fact the tree began to shiver and shake, and there seemed every prospect of the worthy Mrs. Smiffins going down with a run.

"The branch will break," she exclaimed.

"That's just my opinion," replied Bigamini, coolly.

"Monster, will you see me perish without stretching out a hand to save me?"

"How can I help it? Didn't you tie my hands?"

"Save me! save me!"

"I can't, my dear, though much I wish, for you have tied my hands," sang Bigamini.

Though terribly frightened, Mrs. Smiffins's spirit was not subdued.

"I wish I had you under my feet, you contemptible worm," she said.

"I don't, my dear."

"Shouldn't I like to maul you?"

"You'll never have the chance again, my love. I shall marry my third when you're gone."

"Oh, you wretch!"

"Make haste, my pet. I want to see the last of you. Drop down and get smashed, will you, just to oblige yours affectionately, a once happy Smiffins."

"I wonder fire doesn't come out of the mountains and burn you up, you aggravating thing," said his wife.

"Sarah Ann," exclaimed Bigamini, "death's a pleasant and a consoling fact. I never thought as I could look upon death with a hunmoved heye, but I do to-day. Don't be much longer over it, my sweet one, or——."

He paused and extended his leg.

"What?" asked Mrs. Smiffins, nervously.

"I shall have to kick this blooming tree and shake you off, like a ripe happple in a gale of wind."

"Oh, don't, don't!" cried the poor woman. "I'm safe as long as the bough doesn't break."

"I want to see you drop. Won't you go a good flop! Oh! Sarah Ann, I'm sorry for you."

"A fat lot your sorrow's worth," she answered.

"Jumping Moses!" said Bigamini, "I can't stand this much longer. Ain't you a-going to die?"

He advanced to the edge of the plateau, and took a survey of the situation.

This convinced him that his wife couldn't get up.

She must either hang there or fall down by the breaking of the branch or the giving way of her clothes.

"Ta, ta, old girl," he added. "I shall leave you to it."

"Don't go like that," answered Mrs. Bigamini. "If you'll set me free, I'll be a altered woman."

"Not you, Sarah Ann," replied Bigamini, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"I will indeed. Listen here. I'll never nag you no more."

"It ain't in you not to do it, Sarah Ann."

He moved away a little.

"Hear me," she cried, eagerly. "I swear I'll be good and obedient, and never say nothing. No, not if you're ever so aggravating."

"Suppose I marry a third?"

"I'll let you be. The Turks have more than one wife, so have the Mormons. Let me up, there's a good fellow, and you shall keep a harem if you like."

"It ain't good enough, Sarah Ann."

"By the memory of the past, I entreat you. Don't, oh, don't leave me here like this!"

"It was your own doing, my popsey wopsey, recollect that," said Bigamini.

"No matter; forgive me, and I'll be to you all a loving wife should be to her husband."

"You've only been hanging about half-an-hour, my dear, and it's worked a wonderful change in you."

"It has," she said.

"Now I shall leave you till to-morrow morning. Don't holloa so. Wait till you've done a night's hanging on that tree. If the bough don't break, it will make you a regular stunner—a perfect one-er, I may say, so adoo, my dear, until we meet again."

In vain Mrs. Smiffins protested and begged, interspersing her remarks and supplications with the most piercing shrieks.

Bigamini turned coolly on his heel and began to make his way cautiously down the side of the mountain.

His hands were still bound behind his back, and it would have been a serious matter if he had stepped upon a loose stone and missed his footing, for he would have rolled over and over until he reached the bottom.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE SPY BETRAYS HIS MASTER.

IN spite of his care and watchfulness, Bigamini slipped over a piece of lava and fell heavily forward.

Instinctively he tried to stretch out his hands to save his face, and so great was the effort he made, that the cord with which his wife had bound him snapped asunder.

He was free.

A few scratches and bruises were all he received from his fall, and he considered them cheaply purchased at the price of his liberty and freedom of action again.

Reaching the main road once more, he walked slowly along until he came to a small cottage, in which lived an old peasant woman, who got her living by selling wines and spirits.

On the shutter was posted a police notice.

This Bigamini stopped to read, and saw that the *affiche* was to this effect.

"Five thousand ducats reward, together with a free pardon to anyone who will give information leading to the capture of the well-known brigand chief

BARBONI.

Information to be given to the chief officer of police at Naples. By order.

(Signed)

"CIALDINI."

Bigamini pondered over this for a short time, and his villainous little eyes twinkled as if some wicked idea had come into his fertile brain.

Knocking at the door, he exclaimed—

"Open, mother, and don't keep a customer out in the heat, till he's as baked as a parched pea."

The old woman, who had dozed off while doing a little knitting to eke out her slender income, gave him admittance.

"A bottle of wine for a gentleman," continued Bigamini.

She placed before him the wine of the country, which he paid for and proceeded to drink leisurely.

"Are you from the city, master?" asked the old crone.

"Yes," replied Bigamini.

"What is the news, may I ask?"

"No news that I know of."

"Have they caught Barboni yet?"

"Not yet, though I think they will soon," said Bigamini, with a start.

"I hope not. Jesu Maria! the poor will miss him; he was ever good to the poor."

"Rubbish. It was his lieutenant, Signor Bigamini, you mean," said the spy.

"I have not heard of him," answered the crone. "But I mind me well a year back, that Barboni halted here with his men, and gave me two gold pieces, telling me to keep the change. I'm sorry to hear of his misfortunes."

"What do they say, mother?"

"I had a police officer here this morning to eat his sausage and take his glass. He told me that Barboni's band was broken up, and all were killed but the brigand chief, his lieutenant, and a spy."

"That's me," muttered Bigamini.

The old woman's quick ears caught the remark, and she tried to hastily close the door of a cupboard.

"What have you got in there, granny?" asked Bigamini.

"Nothing, signor; 'tis the draught troubles me," replied the crone, with evident uneasiness.

"I should think you have done well in this place, aunty."

"No, indeed, signor. My custom is small.

"But you've been here some time; you save and don't spend much. If people save and don't spend, they grow rich. How much money have you got in that old cracked china teapot I saw."

"None at all, good signor. I am very poor, so poor that I don't taste meat from year's end to year's end."

"You're a miser. I've heard of you before," said Bigamini getting up and advancing to the cupboard.

The crone placed herself resolutely in his way.

"Stand back," she said. "I can see what you are now."

"What am I?" he asked, impudently.

"One of Barboni's band, the spy, I think; you look too mean to be a lieutenant. Stand back, I say; you shall not rob me. I have a dagger, and will defend my money with my life."

Bigamini laughed scornfully.

"Ho, ho!" he cried, "so you have money, mother, have you? That is all right; the cat slipped out of the bag, didn't it?"

Her withered arm was outstretched, and it trembled violently as she held up the rusty dagger, with which she hoped to prevent herself from being robbed.

"Get out of the way. I want your mopusses," said Bigamini, giving her a rude push.

He spoke in English.

"Ha," replied the woman, "you are no true brigand. An Italian would not harm a poor creature like me. You are a foreign hireling, some accursed heretic. Back, spawn of Satan, I spit on thee."

"The old gal's in her tantrums. I shall have to settle her," said Bigamini.

He drew his knife, and keeping out of the reach of her antiquated dagger, which, wielded by such a feeble, palsied hand, could not have done him much harm, cast the weapon at her.

This was a favourite trick of his, and he was an adept at it.

Often in his idle moments he had practised pitching the knife at a plank of wood.

The skill consisted in so throwing it that you could hit a certain marked spot, and make the knife stick upright in it.

Before casting it, he had calculated to a nicety the position of the old woman's heart.

Sh-sh-sh flew the knife through the air, striking the aged victim with a dull thud.

"I'll be a mark on you, my lady," he said, between his clenched teeth.

The dagger fell from her hand, she pressed the other to her side, and with a groan, fell heavily on the floor, which was soon ensanguined with her slowly flowing blood.

"Dead as mutton," said Bigamini, stooping down, and repossessing himself of his knife. "It's a case of Cooper's ducks with her."

Spurning the body with his foot, he approached the cupboard, which he carefully ransacked.

As he expected, the old teapot was the receptacle of gold and notes to the amount of nearly two hundred and fifty pounds in our money.

Unfastening his treasure belt, he added this sum to his already large store, and chuckled grimly as he did so.

Then he refreshed himself with some more wine, and quitting the cottage, walked on slowly to Naples, with as much unconcern as if nothing had happened.

When he reached the city it was evening.

He went at once and fearlessly to Harkaway's house; the door, as was usual in that hot place, was open, and he made his way to Monday's room.

The black was wiping some glasses, and looked up in surprise at seeing the spy.

"Um Bigamini," he cried.

"At your service, sir. I hope I see you well, Mr. Monday," replied Bigamini.

"What um come here for? Got um child?"

"Unfortunately I have not, but I have little doubt I shall be able to put you on the track of the missing kid."

"You know um life not safe," said Monday. "We know all 'bout you now, and me not let you go. You um spy of Barboni, and you got to be hang."

"I don't know so much about that," replied Bigamini. "Give me some wine, and I'll talk to you."

"Well," said Monday, "um got a good cheek."

"So they say."

Monday gave him a tumbler of wine, which he drank with great gusto.

"How's Mr. Harkaway, and all the rest of them?" he asked.

"Mast' Jack very bad, and so Missy Emily too. They fret for um child. Mist' Mole at home. Mist' Clear-the-Track, Mist' Coxswain, and Mist' Harvey all gone after um brigand to rescue Lord St. Clair."

"He's past praying for," said Bigamini.

"What, another of um gone?"

"Yes; his lordship's gone to glory, in kingdom come."

"Where um Barboni?"

"That's telling," replied Bigamini, putting his finger knowingly on one side of his nose, "and I can't afford to let on for nothing."

"You silly fellow come here," said Monday.

"Why?"

"Have to put you in prison, then you go hang, sare—that why."

"My faithful black," said Bigamini, "you're a child. Where's your sense?"

"Um got sense enough."

"No, you haven't. I wouldn't find you."

"What?"

"I wouldn't have you at a gift, and you'd be dear at nothing."

"Stop um chaff," said Monday. "Um laugh t'other side of um face soon."

"No, I shan't. Do you think I'm such an infant as to come here if I didn't know it was all right?"

"Can't see it umself."

"Can I see your master?"

"Mast' Jack upstairs; he mopes in um arm-chair. And Missy Emily keep her bed, with Missy Hilda and Missy Lily to nurse her."

"Take me upstairs. Your society is very agreeable, but, my faithful and unintelligent blackskin, it is possible to have too much of a good thing."

Monday looked angrily at him.

"Come along," he replied. "Um grin through um prison bars soon."

He led the way upstairs, keeping his eye carefully fixed on the spy all the while.

At the door of the drawing-room he paused and knocked.

"Come in," said Jack.

He started up when he saw Bigamini.

"You here?" he exclaimed. "How did this happen?"

"Good-day, Mr. Harkaway—hope I see you, sir," answered Bigamini.

"Do you know your life is forfeited?" said Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"You are in the proscribed list, and you can hope for no mercy from me, unless you have come to restore my child, and then, perhaps, I could use my influence to get your sentence commuted from death to penal servitude for life."

"Thank you," replied Bigamini, drily, "I don't want your help at present, Mr. Harkaway."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you ever read in the Bible of a certain party called Judas, sir?"

"Judas? Yes. He betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver."

"That's what I'm going to do, though I mean to have much more than thirty pieces."

"Judas afterwards killed himself."

"That's what I'm not going to do," replied Bigamini, with a chuckle. "You have seen the bills of reward, sir, for the capture of Barboni?"

"Yes. Oh, I see what you mean now," said Jack. "You mean to betray Barboni's hiding-place, claiming the reward and the free pardon?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I can't say I admire you for your treachery, thought I am glad that we shall have the scoundrel in our power. Where is he?"

"That I only tell to the chief of the police, begging your pardon, Mr. Harkaway."

"Is Hunston with him?"

"Yes, though he can't see him."

"How is that?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Barboni is blind, sir."

"Blind?"

"Yes; as blind as a bat and this is how it happened. He sentenced Lord St. Clair to death, and he was thrown into the boiling lava; but before he died, he threw the lava at Barboni, and it went into his eyes, blinding him."

"Horrible! Poor St. Clair! Still he avenged Carden," said Jack.

"I can't tell you much about your child, sir," continued Bigamini.

"Is he not dead?" asked Jack, in surprise. "We have mourned him as one lost to us for ever."

"Will you stand my friend, sir, if I tell you all I know?"

"Of course I gladly will."

"You remember the wolf in the sybil's cave, sir?"

"Yes."

"When the witch was mur—ahem! that is, when she died, the wolf followed us to our camp, and the morning of the attack the beast ran away with the child in his mouth, and the ears and hands we sent you were cut off another child, so that we didn't hurt yours."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack; "he lives—he lives! Thank God for this!"

Springing from his chair, he rushed up stairs to communicate the good news to Emily.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE GOOD NEWS.

EMILY was lying in bed, very pale and ill; Hilda was sitting by her side, reading to her, while Lily was fanning her wan face.

Suddenly Jack sprang into the room.

"Emmy, dear, I've got good news for you," he said. "Are you strong enough to bear it?"

She turned her lustrous eyes anxiously upon him.

"Is it about our—our child?" she asked.

"Yes; he is not dead."

"Thank Heaven! But he is mutilated. We saw—at least, you saw the ears and the hand that cruel brigand cut off."

"That was a trick to work upon our feelings. Another child was mutilated and ours is safe."

"How do you know this?" demanded Emily.

Jack related what Bigamini had told him.

"Heaven is good to us. But can we believe it?" she said.

"I think so. Bigamini has nothing to gain by inventing such a story, and he has come for the express purpose of betraying his master."

"Will not the savage wolf kill him?"

"I have heard of animals taking a fancy to children, and this wolf was not a wild one, you must remember. We must hope for the best."

Emily sat up in bed, and her tears fell fast.

They were tears of joy.

"I shall soon get better now, Jack, dear," she said. "Oh, I am so delighted. Do go and look at once for the boy."

"I will send Monday to the mountains."

"Why not go yourself?" she asked, reproachfully.

"I must capture Barboni myself. You know I have sworn to do so. It has been the ambition of my life," answered Jack.

"Oh, when will these dangers be over?" she said, with a sigh.

"Soon, I hope, darling. Kiss me, and rouse yourself," answered Jack.

Emily embraced him tenderly.

"You have made me so happy," she said; "happier than I ever thought I should be again in this world. I will pray that the end of all our troubles may be drawing near."

Hilda came up to Jack.

"This is great news," she exclaimed.

"Is it not?" replied Jack.

"You are going after Barboni?"

"Yes."

"Capture him at all hazards. You have fortune with you now. Bring him to Naples."

"I will—dead or alive."

"That is right. This man must die before we can know any peace."

"He will not be able to fight much, for in dying Lord St. Clair blinded him."

"Is poor St. Clair dead?" said Hilda. "Another victim to your fatal resolve to exterminate these brigands."

"It can't be helped, my dear Mrs. Harvey," answered Jack. "When I put my foot down and say a thing must be done, I mean it, and done it generally is, somehow or other."

"Well, go on your errand. You have my best wishes," replied Hilda.

He went away, leaving the ladies much more cheerful than they had been before.

They were all anxious to get back to England.

It was the wish of their hearts to see their native land again, and be rid of the constant alarms and worries amidst which they had lived for some time past.

Lady Darrel had written to them.

She said that Luni was much improved, and, thanks to Hilda's generosity, which placed money at her service, she was able to procure a tutor for him, and so give him some education, of which he stood much in need.

The lawyers she had consulted about her claims were actively investigating them.

They declared that if she could get the confession of the brigand chief, they had no doubt they would prove her title to the estates and the peerage in a very short time.

An uncle of Darrel's, hearing that he was dead, had taken possession of the property, and was not inclined to give it up without a struggle.

In a lawsuit Barboni's confession would be every thing.

Going to the drawing-room again, Jack found Monday keeping guard over Bigamini.

"Now, my little man," exclaimed Jack, cheerily, "come with me to the police."

"Ready, sir," replied Bigamini.

Jack laughed and put on his hat.

All at once a tall, gaunt figure darkened the doorway.

The strange figure was Mr. Mole, who presented a curious appearance.

He was in his shirt sleeves, and had twined a wreath of vine leaves round his head, which made him look like an antique Bacchus.

In his hand he carried a carpet broom.

Stretching out his arm, he exclaimed—

"Make way for your sovereign lord the king."

"Is he mad?" whispered Jack to Monday.

The black grinned till he showed all his teeth.

"Um been going on anyhow all day, sare," he said. "Um not know 'xactly what to make of um."

"Has he been drinking more than usual?"

"Um always at it, sare."

"It seems to me like a case of 'delicious trimmings,'" muttered Jack.

"Him off um chump, sare, that for sartin."

"He must be put under some restraint. So much drink in this hot country would turn any one's brain?"

"Halt!" exclaimed Mole, bringing his broom down with a bang.

"Mr. Mole," said Jack.

"I don't know the gentleman," replied Mole. "I am Alexander the Great, just returned from the conquest of the world, and I could weep because I have not another world to conquer."

He put his hand to his eye and wiped away a tear as big as a pea.

"Why," he added with savage energy, "why, Jack, have I not another world to conquer?"

"We'll find one for your majesty," said Jack.

Bigamini began to laugh.

"Ha! does the slave dare to laugh at me? Let him die the death," cried Mole.

Raising his broom, he ran furiously at the little tailor, and catching him in the stomach, rolled him over on the carpet.

"Thus perish all the victims of my just indignation," said Mr. Mole, grandly.

"Oh, Lord, oh! he's hit me in the wind and bust my boiler," exclaimed Bigamini, getting up and rubbing his stomach.

"What! is the wretch still alive? By the sun, moon and stars, by the octopus in the Brighton aquarium, and by the living jingo, I'll have his vital spark," exclaimed Mole.

He brandished his broom and began to beat the spy.

"Die, dog, die!" he roared.

"I say," exclaimed Bigamini, protecting his head with his arms as well as he could, "this won't do. Mr. Harkaway, stop him. He's a raving maniac; stop him, sir."

Jack was laughing too much to be able to interfere.

The spy at last got out of the reach of the broom, and made a side dash at Mole.

"Take the change out of that, Alexander the Great," he said, as he struck him on the nose.

Mr. Mole went to grass heavily and groaned.

"Thus fell Wolsey in all his greatness," he murmured; "thus fell Cæsar, struck down by the dagger of the assassin. Fallen, fallen, fallen from my high estate, as Dryden sings. Adieu to all my greatness, as the swan of Avon says."

"Bust me up!" exclaimed Bigamini. "He's a caution. Is he often like this? Because you ought to keep him locked up, Mr. Harkaway."

"I will have him cared for. It is the effect of drink," replied Jack. "Send for a doctor."

"Doctors are humbugs. Who can minister to a mind diseased? I pause for a reply."

"Monday," whispered Jack, "you must put Mr. Mole in a room by himself. Lock him in with some bread and water till I come back, or he will do some one a mischief."

"Yes, sare. S'pose um mad."

"It is what they call D T., or *delirium tremens*, a not uncommon result of excessive drinking."

"Why not mind um umself, sare?"

"I want you to go to the mountains at once, to look for my child, whom you have heard Bigamini say the wolf ran away with."

"Um off like a shot, sare," replied Monday.

"I think," said Bigamini, "that the wolf will be most likely to go back to the sybil's cave."

"Try there first," said Monday.

"Find my boy, Monday, and you will not only make me more than ever your debtor, but you will save my poor wife's life, which is wrapped up in that of the child."

"No fear, sare, Monday do his best."

Jack and Bigamini walked together to the police office, where they saw the chief, who at once made preparations to capture the brigand.

Every one regarded Bigamini with looks of aversion.

Spies, in all ages and every country, are hated by right-minded people.

It was considered that he was a base scoundrel to betray his master in the hour of his direst need and extremity.

Meanwhile Monday had to attend to Mr. Mole, who had been drinking to such an extent, that he was clearly not reponsible for his actions.

His head had become affected.

He did not know who he was, or where he was, any more than a baby.

"Come on, sare," said Monday.

"Lead me to my prison-house, I will follow as becomes a conquered monarch."

Just then Hilda came into the drawing-room, Emily's condition being so much improved by the magic of good news that she could leave her with Lily.

Mr. Mole instantly fell on his knees.

"Radiant queen," he said, in a soft voice, "I am a captured monarch, vanquished in war by the treachery of my army. Pity me, peerless being."

Hilda looked astonished.

"Mr. Mole, do you not know me?" she said.

"Know you, mistress of my soul and enslaver of my heart? Will thy devoted lover ever forget the blissful past?"

"What does this mean, Monday?" asked Hilda.

"Mist' Mole go mad, mum; he crook him elbow too much."

"Has he been drinking?"

"Like um fish, mum; for three days um eat nothing, and drink, drink all day and night."

"What a pity! Does Mr. Harkaway know this?"

"Yes, mum; he told me to look after um."

"Do so at once. It is dreadful to see a man like this," said Hilda.

"March," said Monday; "I m got to go."

"Farewell, empress of my soul," said Mr. Mole; "the dark days of my captivity will be lightened by the reflection of thy dazzling beauty. Alexander of Macedon is thine."

He seized her hand, kissed it, and folding his arms with dignity, added, "Lead on, base groom. I am thy captive."

"Poor ole Mole, um very bad," muttered Monday, as he led him to a room, in which he placed him with a supply of bread and a good large pitcher of water.

When he had secured him, and placed it out of his reach to do any mischief, he spoke to his wife Ada, and told her he was going in search of the child.

She wished him success, and he started once more for the open country, in which he had already rendered so much service to his master.

He had a difficult task before him.

It was impossible to say if the child was alive or dead. The wolf might have killed and eaten him, while on the other hand it was probable that he had taken him to some mountain cave and watched over him.

CHAPTER LXX.

BARBONI HUMBLING TO THE DUST.

WHEN Bigamini left Barboni in the hut, the thoughts of the brigand were very bitter.

His eyes were inflamed and burning fearfully.

But the mere physical pain was nothing compared to that which he suffered in the mind.

He had lost all.

His mother was dead, his wife was killed by his side, his band ~~was~~ sed and himself blinded, while his enemies had triumphed.

He cursed Jack Harkaway in his heart, for it was the plucky Englishman who had brought him to his present state.

Curses, however, are not of much use to any who use them.

Bigamini had insulted him.

This was an additional pang to the proud brigand, who could not bear to be dependent upon a miserable spy whose life had hung upon his favour.

"It's hard to bear, very hard," he muttered.

All his sins were coming home to him now, and the iron entered into his soul.

The sound of footsteps fell upon his ear.

"Hunston, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "I can't get a doctor for love or money until to-morrow, and you'll have to wait."

"Wait?" repeated the brigand. "You did not talk to me in that way before."

"Why shouldn't I?" answered Hunston; "you're played out now. The game's up. I for one shall hook it."

"Will you leave me?"

"Yes; I've had about enough of this life, and I've got some money in my belt. How much have you got?"

"I don't know exactly," replied Barboni.

"Give it me," exclaimed Hunston; "it can't be of much use to you now. Hand it over."

"Now, if I am to drag on a miserable existence as a blind man, I shall have to beg if I have no money."

"Beg away," replied Hunston, unfeelingly. "Fork out the tin."

"I never thought I should come to this: you were my trusted lieutenant."

"You should have managed things better. I'm not a fool. Can't I see when it's time to throw up the sponge? Give me what money you have about you, and I'll step it at once."

"I am helpless," replied Barboni, with a deep sigh. "Take it; undo my belt, and you will have a fortune."

Hunston advanced to the fallen brigand, and took off his belt, which he opened, and looked joyfully over its contents.

The amount of notes, gold, and jewels surpassed his most sanguine expectations.

"This is plummy," he said. "Good-bye, old son; I wish you luck."

"Do you leave me to my fate?" asked Barboni.

"What's the use of stopping?"

"Is there no friendship between us?"

"Not a ha'porth; you were always a tyrant when you were well up, and I'm not sorry to get away, I can tell you."

Barboni sighed again.

He heard the chink of the gold and the rustle of the notes as Hunston placed his belt, in addition to his own, round his waist, then his footsteps died away, and his lieutenant was gone.

"Alone, alone," moaned the wretched man. "Blind, peniless, insulted, deserted, what a sad future have I before me."

He was right.

Toro would have been his friend if he had been the man he once was, but blind, he was good for nothing as a brigand.

He did not know what to do, and paced the hut up and down, cautiously extending his hands to feel his way as he walked.

After a time he heard footsteps again.

This sound was accompanied by the click of rifles and the measured tread of men.

He listened attentively.

"Toro and his band," he said to himself.

What would he not have given to be able to see?

All at once the noise ceased, and only the tread of one man was audible.

"Is that you, Toro?" he asked.

"No, signor. It is Bigamini, your prince of spies, as you used once to call me."

"Come in, good Bigamini," answered Barboni. "I am lonely, and want company. I forgive you for insulting me. Come, and let us be friends."

"Has Hunston been back with the doctor?"

"He came without him, and, having robbed me, went away for ever."

"Oh! one bird flown," said Bigamini. "Never mind, one good catch in the net is better than none at all. You're a big fish."

This speech roused the brigand's suspicions.

"You would not betray me?" he said, in a tremulous voice. "Think of the future we have in store for us if I get back my sight."

"Don't talk rubbish," replied Bigamini; "you're a settled member."

"No, no. Santo Dio! I shall be greater than ever soon. I have got some treasure buried. Hunston did not take all. You shall be my trusted favourite. I will make you rich and great. Think of that. Only be faithful to me now."

"Hold your row," was Bigamini's answer.

Going to the door, he put his fingers in his mouth, and gave a shrill whistle.

The next moment Jack Harkaway entered the hut, which was entirely surrounded by soldiers in a double row.

A police officer followed Jack, holding a pair of handcuffs.

"Is that the man, signor?" asked the officer.

"Yes. I will swear to him," answered Jack. "It is Barboni."

At these words the brigand chief trembled more violently than before.

"In the king's name, I arrest you for brigandage, robbery, and murder," continued the officer.

"I submit," said Barboni, who, by a desperate effort, tried to be calm.

He had recognised Jack's voice, and did not wish to exhibit any weakness in his presence.

The click of the manacles was next heard, as they were fastened on his wrists.

"Did Bigamini betray me?" asked Barboni.

"Yes ; I don't mind telling you that, if it's any comfort to you."

"My dying curse upon the hound ! my bitter curse upon him !" said the brigand, in a tone of deep feeling.

Barboni was placed in a cart, round which the soldiers formed, making an escort, from which rescue was impossible.

But who was there to attempt to help the fallen brigand ? No one.

All had perished or deserted him, and as he was driven slowly to Naples to be placed in a strong prison, his proud heart was bowed down and humbled to the dust.

His life was drawing to a close, and the scaffold, with its hideous accessories, loomed up terribly before him.

Jack Harkaway had, through Bigamini's treachery, triumphed over him at last.

The Englishmen had kept their solemn oath, though it had cost them dear.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE TRAITOR'S REWARD.

WHEN the traitor had accomplished his vile purpose, and seen Barboni led away captive by the soldiers, he strutted about as proud as a bantam cock.

His reward was a large one

Besides this, he received a free pardon ; the police would not touch him, and he could walk about Naples with as little fear of arrest as the most respectable citizen of the city.

All he had to do now was to go and claim the reward.

Then he could set sail in one of the Marseilles steamers, reach France, travel first-class like a gentleman to Paris, and enjoy himself in that gay capital with his ill-gotten gains.

He looked round the hut, and thought that a drink of wine wouldn't do him any harm

An old-fashioned amphora, or jar of clay, stood in the corner, and he poured some sparkling wine into a horn.

It used to be Barboni's favourite, and the brigand chief was not a bad judge of anything that related to eating and drinking

"Old Barboni won't have much more of this sort of tiple," said the spy, with a sardonic grin. "He's played out, and it's my turn now. Won't I be a swell in Paris? My eye! Suppose I call myself a prince."

His eyes twinkled at the idea.

"Prince Bigamini, there's a rattling title; got estates in Italy; plenty of cash to spend. I shall be the rage."

A slight noise in the rear roused his attention from the vainglorious contemplation in which he was plunged.

"Oh! crumbs," he cried, "what's up?"

He took a hasty glance at the door, and saw several dark figures approaching.

"Strike me comical!" he said, "it's Toro. Oh! here's a go. I've put my foot in it now."

He instantly fell down in a corner, and pretended to be insensible, while almost immediately afterwards the brigands entered.

"Where is Barboni?" asked Toro. "Santissima Virgine!" he added, crossing himself, "something has happened."

"Here is his man," answered a brigand pointing to Bigamini.

"Wake him up."

Bigamini was pushed rather roughly, and showed no signs of life.

A kick or two caused him to raise himself on his elbow, and look wildly about him.

"Where am I?" he asked, with an air of forgetfulness and confusion.

"In the hut," replied Toro.

"Where?"

"Are you hurt?"

"I don't know what you call hurt," replied Bigamini, recovering from his pretended insensibility, "but a soldier gave me an ugly blow during the fight, and I crawled in here."

"What fight?"

"The soldiers surprised Barboni. They were led on by the Englishman, Jack Harkaway, and I fought like a lion. He was no good, because he was blind, and what could I do against a host of them?"

"Is Barboni captured?" asked Toro, arching his bull-like neck, as his nostrils dilated.

"I suppose so, if he isn't here"

"Diavolo !"

"Believe me, Signor Toro, I fought like a devil, and how I was not captured I don't know."

Toro was greatly excited.

"How long ago was this?" he asked.

"I cannot tell, exactly, but not long, I expect," replied Bigamini.

"The moon is up. It is some distance to Naples; they will travel slowly, and perhaps bivouac by the way," said Toro, hurriedly. "What do you say, my lads, shall we make a dash for Barboni?"

"Si, si!" cried the brigands, in chorus.

"He was always a valiant gentleman and a good robber," cried Toro.

"He was, he was!"

"Shoulder your muskets, then. We will show those rascally Bersaglieri what Toro and his men can do. Fall in, Bigamini."

"You must excuse me, Signor Toro," answered Bigamini; "I'm that bad, I don't think I could walk a mile to save my life."

"Where is your wound?"

"On my—my head, Signor Toro."

"Come here; let's look at it."

The spy trembled.

He affected to sink back in a faint, and groaned terribly.

"The poor devil is no good to us," said Toro, compassionately. "He appears to have fought well for his master; let him be where he is; we will see to him on our return. Forward, my men, to rescue Barboni."

The brigands stepped forward with alacrity, and, to the great delight of the spy, left him to himself, without seeking any further for the imaginary wound, which they would not have found if they had hunted for a month.

When they were gone Bigamini got up.

"That was a close shave," he said. "I'll clear out of this."

Accordingly he quitted the hut, and was proceeding to Naples when he thought of his wife.

"There are so many slips between cup and lip in this wretched life," he murmured, "that I'll go and make sure she has broken her precious neck."

He struck across the mountain's side, and sought the spot

where he had left the unfortunate Mrs. Smiffins hanging to a branch of a tree which stood on the brow of the chasm.

The tree was there, but no Mrs. Smiffins.

All that remained of her was a tattered remnant of her dress.

"She's gone to glory," said Bigamini, with a grin. "Now I'm all right."

He concluded that she had fallen down and was killed, so without waiting to make any further investigation, he walked as quickly as he could to Naples.

But he took the most unfrequented road, to avoid meeting Toro and his men.

When he reached the police station it was growing late.

It was one of his maxims that one ought to strike the iron while it was hot.

If he went to sleep over the matter, something might happen during the night which would cheat him out of his reward.

He hungered after the gold he had earned by basely betraying his master.

The chief of the police had left word that the five thousand ducats were to be given him on demand, directly news of the capture of Barboni was brought to them.

Jack Harkaway had rendered him that friendly service by galloping on in front of the soldiers.

It was known all over Naples that Barboni was captured. Walking into the office, he said—

"I am Bigamini, and I want the reward, if you please."

"Ah, yes; you are the spy," replied the officer in command, with a plainly perceptible sneer. "I recognise you."

"If you look at me in that way, you will be sure to know me when you meet me again," answered Bigamini, impudently.

"Don't be impertinent," said the officer, with a severe look.

"No, signor," said Bigamini, trembling for his money.

"How will you have it?"

"Gold, all gold, in bags," replied Bigamini, eagerly.

The officer handed him five bags, each containing the value of a thousand ducats.

"Take it and begone," he said.

Bigamini had no wish to stay the atmosphere of a police station never agreed with him.

It made him ill, so he stuffed the bags into his pockets, and stepped out of the place gaily.

But retribution was in store for him.

Scarcely had he reached the door when a bulky form stopped his egress, and brandished a huge umbrella over his head.

"You little villain, I've got you again, have I?" exclaimed the figure, savagely. "They told me you had gained the reward, and I knew I should find you sooner or later coming after the money, so I determined to wait for you if I stood in the street all night."

"Sarah Ann!" gasped the astonished tailor.

"Yes, sir; your lawful wife."

"Oh, scissors!" exclaimed Bigamini.

"You thought me dead, but I didn't hang there long; some kind people who had come to see the burning mountain came by, and hearing my screams, helped me up. Oh, you beast! you wretch!"

She beat him with her umbrella, and seizing his hair, pulled it violently.

"I say, Sarah Ann, turn it up. It hurts. You're pulling out handfuls," said Bigamini, frightened out of his life and suffering agony.

"Serve you right too, you deceitfullest of all deceitful, slimy, crawling vipers!" replied his wife.

"I ain't slimy."

"Yes, you are. Oh! drat you, I'll serve you out. I'll warm you. You'll get it hot this time, make no error," said Mrs. Smiffins, with a handful of hair in each hand.

"Let go, will you," cried Bigamini, angrily.

"I shan't," was the reply.

The little man struggled into the street amid the laughter of the police officers, who thoroughly enjoyed the scene.

His wife continued to attack him in the same desperate manner, and he defended himself as best he could.

His object seemed to be to get her away from the officers into some quiet corner.

This he at length accomplished.

They turned a corner, and with a savage blow, he said—

"Don't maul me about so, or you'll be sorry for it."

"Shall I?" she said, beating him with the umbrella.

"You fool," he cried, "why don't you be quiet?"

"Because I'm your wife and you can't alter it. You've committed bigamy and I mean to transport you."

"Let go. I shan't ask you again," he said, clenching his teeth.

"Never! I'll have my revenge," replied Mrs. Smiffins.

"So will I, once and for ever," said Bigamini.

He drew his knife, raised his arm, and plunged it into her body.

She fell instantly, and he ran away, leaving her bathed in blood, to be found by the police when they came round.

"I am murdered. Oh! that I should have come to this," she moaned.

Bigamini was too hardened now to care about committing a crime; his only anxiety was to get clear off.

This he succeeded in doing, and soon reached the extremity of the city, making for the country, where he knew he could obtain shelter. Naples was closed to him again after this.

He would be accused of his wife's murder, and his free pardon for brigandage would not avail him in the least.

His treachery to Barboni had rendered it impossible that he could again join the brigands, and it was difficult for him to guess how he could get away to France.

He took the old road which led to the Volturno, intending to sleep that night in the witch's cave.

His old fright in the cave was forgotten, and he did not care if he saw the ghost of the murdered witch, as he was so tired that he could have slept in a graveyard.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE RESCUE.

VESUVIUS was still grandly throwing up masses of flame and ashes, as Toro and his men hastened along after the soldiers.

They came up with them about half way between Vesuvius and Naples.

The men had been halted by their commanding officer near a roadside inn, where they were allowed half-an-hour for refreshment.

Barboni was sitting on a bench in the cart, where he had been placed when captured.

Two police officers and two soldiers guarded him, the other men having piled arms by the side of the road and scattered themselves about, some smoking their favourite cigarettes, others drinking the thin, cheap wine.

Now that the band of the brigand chief was known to be destroyed, no thought of a rescue had entered the official mind.

Toro saw that his opportunity had arrived, as his keen eye took in the details of the situation we have described.

Small though his band was, numbering only six men besides himself, he did not hesitate to make the attack.

Creeping up in the darkness, only illumined by the moon, which was veiled at intervals by passing clouds, and the flames of distant Vesuvius, the brigands neared the cart.

Four rifles covered the four guards, and, at a signal from Toro, the men fired with fatal effect.

The guards fell to the ground, and Toro dashed forward with great bravery, reaching the cart just as the alarm was given.

He jumped in, seized the whip, and saying to Barboni—"Courage, amico mio—all is well so far," lashed the horse into a gallop, and dashed off into the country.

The officer in command fired his revolver without effect, and the soldiers rushed to their arms.

It was too late.

This bold rescue had been so well planned, and so ably executed, that the cart was out of sight before the men were ready to fire.

This they did in a volley as soon as they could, and were so fortunate as to hit two out of the six retreating brigands.

These unfortunates bit the dust, but the others got off, and, joining Toro by running at the top of their speed, formed a small rear guard in the case of pursuit.

The soldiers followed up the road at the double.

Toro, being well acquainted with the country, quitted the high road after going about a mile, turned down a narrow lane, and made for Possilippo.

The soldiers were completely baffled, and, furious with rage and vexation, returned to barracks, bearing their dead with them.

The rescue of Barboni created the utmost excitement in

Naples, and the officer in charge was tried by court-martial, and dismissed the service for his negligence.

The authorities had paid the traitor his price for the betrayal of his master, and after once more having the redoubtable Barboni in their power, they had let him slip through their fingers.

Toro knew that a strict search would be made all along the countryside, and with a tact very creditable to him, determined to seek an entirely new shelter.

With this end in view, he sought the seashore.

He had been a boatman before he killed his man in a drunken quarrel, and, to avoid the galleys, became a brigand with a small following.

The tie that existed between master and man was that they had also dyed their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature.

Toro's knowledge of the coast enabled him to remember that in a wild, wave-washed, rocky part, some distance from Naples, was a cave, only accessible at low water.

At low water, you could scramble over huge boulders of rock, and reach the entrance without wading through the sea.

But at high tide there was a considerable depth of water, up to the very edge of the hole which gave admittance to this hollow refuge for evil-doers.

In this place Toro took refuge, nor did he rest until Barboni was placed in safety.

The cart was then allowed to be carried wherever the unguided horse chose to take it.

A brigand was sent out with money to purchase from the peasantry some food, wine, and tobacco, laden with which he returned in a couple of hours' time.

Barboni was deeply grateful to Toro for his brave rescue.

"Wait," he said, "until my sight comes back to me, and you will see that I know how to reward my friends."

"Whether you ever become yourself again or not," replied Toro, "you can be safe and cared for with me."

"I am rejoiced to think," continued Barboni, "that the accursed Inglesi will not have the proud satisfaction of seeing me perish on the scaffold. It was that which made me tremble; the triumph of one's enemies is so bitter."

"Captain! captain!" exclaimed the man on guard at the mouth of the cave.

"Cospetto!" said Toro, "what is it, my lad? Are the hawks bearing down upon us?"

"Not so bad as that."

"Corpo di Baccho! What do you disturb me for about a trifle when I am talking to a greater brigand than ever you will be?"

"Holy Virgin, signor, you speak the truth there, and I am as proud as you can be to have his excellency Barboni with us. He does us too much honour."

"Tush! how you waste time in jabbering. What's in the wind now?"

"I was scanning the bay with a telescope, when I saw a small boat rowed by two men. In the stern sits a third, who steers her."

"Well, by my beard," laughed Toro, "there's a lot in that to wonder at."

"But that isn't all."

"Ah, that makes it a horse of another colour; circumstances alter cases."

"Behind the little boat comes a big one rowed by six men, and it seems to be in pursuit of the little one."

"Diavolo!" said Toro, fiercely, "that's not fair. What, six against two! No, no, this must be seen to."

"The pursued is trying to make the shore before the big boat can overhaul it, which it is doubtful if it will be able to do," continued the brigand.

"I'll come out; how is the tide?"

"Coming in fast, signor, but you can reach the sands without trouble yet."

"Give me the glass," exclaimed Toro.

He took it, and advancing to the cave's entrance, scanned the horizon, and carefully examined the boats.

There could be no doubt that one boat was followed by the other, and the rowers in each were straining every nerve.

Suddenly Toro uttered a cry.

"Per Baccho!" he cried, "this is singular. The man who steers the little boat has but one arm. Can it be Lieutenant Hunstoni?"

At the mention of Hunston's name, Barboni pricked up his ears.

"Did you say that Hunstoni was in danger?" he asked,

"It appears so to me."

"Let him take his fate then," replied Barboni, savagely.

"He has robbed and insulted me, abandoning me to chance. May his carcase rot on a dunghill."

"Nay," said Toro, "I don't like to see a bandit in difficulty; if he left you, he doubtless had his own little game to play. I'll go and see further into this matter."

Barboni sat down again.

He was unable to move about in a strange place without assistance.

He muttered to himself and cursed Hunston, employing the bitterest invectives against him and Bigamini.

His chief hope was that he would one day recover his sight, dig up his buried treasure, and travel in search of his late spy and lieutenant, so that he might shoot them down like dogs, and have his revenge upon them for their ill-treatment of him when helpless and friendless.

Meanwhile Toro slung his rifle over his back and descended to the sands, where he placed himself behind a rock and carefully scrutinised the two boats.

Both boats were nearing the shore, and not more than a hundred and fifty yards divided the two.

Desperate indeed were the efforts of the rowers.

Those in the little boat were skilled watermen, and bent over their oars like galley slaves, casting the spray high into the morning air.

At length Toro thought the time had come, and raised his rifle.

He fired, and one of the rowers in the big boat fell back mortally wounded.

This unexpected attack caused the greatest surprise and consternation among the rowers, who, panic-stricken, ceased their labours.

Rising in the stern, the coxswain of the police galley urged his men to persist in their work, which they did with evident reluctance.

Again Toro fired, and a second man fell, considerably slackening the speed of the craft.

Not liking the hidden fire, the men openly mutinied and refused to go any nearer the ambushade.

In vain their leader exhorted them to continue to do their duty; they turned their boat round and stood out to sea again.

A loud hurrah hurled defiance at them; the boat shot through the water; its nose grated against the sand, and a

man stepped on shore. It was Hunston, who looked round for his deliverer, and saw Toro emerge from his place of concealment behind the rock.

"Is it you, my fine fellow?" exclaimed Hunston. "Cospetto! I owe my life to your friendly shots."

"You are welcome," replied Toro. "How did you happen to get into such a mess?"

"That is easily told. I had arranged to escape in a bark which is riding at anchor round the point, and these brave fellows agreed to row me to her at daybreak."

"I see," said Toro; "the police were down on you before you could get out of the harbour."

"You're right, and a precious hard row we had for it. I must have been taken had it not been for you; and now, my gay and gentle Toro, tell me the news. While I was skulking in a Trattoria last night, I heard that Il Signor Barboni had escaped."

"Thanks to a little stratagem of mine, he is safe."

"Where?"

Toro shrugged his shoulders and looked doubtfully at Hunston.

"Per Dios!" he replied, "I don't know how to treat you. The chief says you deserted him, after using him badly, and what with the treachery of that infernal rascal Bigamini—may he burn eternally!—and what with the danger about, I don't know who can be trusted."

Hunston laughed.

"You can put confidence in me, mio caro; if I am no longer a brigand, I am not a traitor. No, I never sold a pal in my life, and have lived too long to begin now," he answered.

"The chief is full against you, and if I take you to my cave, there will be a tragedy if he knows you are there, and can pistol you."

"The old bat is too blind to be dangerous," replied Hunston. "Let me remain with you till night. I will make another try for the brig before the moon is up."

"Well, I'll trust you," answered Toro. "As for me, I've no malice against you."

Hunston spoke to the boatmen, telling them to hide the boat in some cove, go to an inn, and rest themselves till evening, and then await him at the same spot after the night fell.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE WOLF AND THE CHILD.

BIGAMINI was afraid, after the murder of his wife, to return to Naples, and his idea was to tramp along the coast until he came to some port where he was not known, hoping to get away in a ship to Genoa or Marseilles.

He took a little money out of his belt, and put it in his pocket to pay the expenses of the journey.

One of his accomplishments was playing on the flute, which he could do tolerably well, and seeing a beggar with one of those instruments, a little way out of Naples, he knocked him down and stole it.

Armed with the flute, he tore his clothes to make himself look as poor as possible, and slouching his broad-rimmed hat over his eyes, he thought he would pass as a strolling musician.

The fatigues and anxieties he had gone through of late made him long for a good night's rest, and reaching the cave which the sibyl had inhabited, he resolved to indulge in as sound a slumber as his conscience would allow him.

Scarcely had he set foot inside the cave when a snapping and snarling noise warned him that it would be dangerous to intrude further without making an examination into the cause of the strange sounds.

A steady look enabled him to see a wolf, who bared his gums and showed his teeth in a threatening manner.

"Hullo, my boy, I think I have seen you before," said Bigamini.

It was the witch's wolf, who had come back to the old place, but why he should prevent anyone from entering it was difficult to understand.

A childish voice suddenly exclaimed from the depth of the cave—

"Be quiet, you wolf, or I shall have to beat you. How cross you are to-night."

Bigamini's eyes twinkled.

"Here's a go," he said. "Blest if I ain't the luckiest cove out. It's Mr. Harkaway's kid. Here's a find."

Raising his voice aloud, he added—

"Master Jack."

"Who's that?" asked the child.

"I'm Mr. Monday's friend," called Bigamini. "You remember me; I have nursed you in the pantry."

"Oh, yes; I remember Bigamy. Have you come to fetch me home?"

"Of course I have."

"Come inside. It's very dark, but you'll soon get used to it; I have, and the wolf won't let me go out when he's here."

"Call off the wolf."

The child did so.

"Wolfey, wolfey!" he said, "come here, sir!"

But the wolf wouldn't move, and kept on snarling, as if he thought the intruder had come to take the child away from him.

Young Jack, seeing this, walked to the entrance, and patted the wolf on the head, which quieted him a little, though he still kept his eye on Bigamini.

"He don't seem to hurt you," said the latter.

"Not he; I like him. He is a very good wolf, and when he took me away from the brigands, though I was frightened, he carried me here so carefully and swam across the river with me in his mouth."

"Did he, though? It's a wonder he didn't make a meal of you."

"Has my papa killed the brigands?" asked young Jack.

"It's all up with them; they're done for."

"And I may go home now, I suppose?" replied young Jack.

"We'll start to-morrow morning, but we shall have a long walk. Your pa and ma have gone to another place."

"Oh, that's a bother," said young Jack. "But I don't mind a bit, so long as we get away from here."

Seeing the boy and Bigamini friendly, the wolf ceased his threatening demonstrations and began to think that it was all right.

Bigamini had some supper, which young Jack generously shared with him, and the two went to sleep, the wolf lying at their feet.

They were up with the sun in the morning, and prepared to start on their journey.

Child-like, young Jack placed implicit faith in his new friend, and thoroughly believed that he was going to take him home, when in reality the rascal was going to do just the reverse.

He meant to take him to France.

His plan was to make Harkaway pay a heavy ransom for the restoration of his son.

They walked along the dusty road, young Jack holding Bigamini's hand and the wolf trotting along by their side, determined not to lose sight of the boy.

It was a curious illustration of the fondness which savage animals sometimes take to human beings.

This wolf was comparatively tame, we must remember, and had lived with the witch many years as her pet.

Perhaps he felt the want of man's companionship.

He was more like a dog than a wolf, but in reality these two belong to the same species, and instances of tamed wolves are by no means rare.

"Can you sing, Master Jack?" asked Bigamini.

"Yes," said the child, proudly.

"What?"

"Let dogs delight;" and "I have been there and still would go."

"Those are hymns; they won't do. Could you learn a little Italian song, from an opera?" said Bigamini.

"What for?" asked young Jack.

"I've got a flute, and I'm rather short of money, so I thought that if I played and you sang, we could get some help along the road, because, as I told you, your pa and ma have moved, and we've a long way to go."

"Why didn't they give you money when you came after me?"

"They didn't know I was going, and I found you quite by accident."

"Oh! I see," said the boy. "Well, if we've got to get money, I'll learn a song."

"Try this—'*Ah! che la morte.*' It's from an opera and very pretty. I'll play it you."

He took out the flute from his pocket and put the three pieces together.

Then he began to play, and though his knowledge of music was slight, he had the air in his mind, and acquitted himself very well.

Young Jack soon learnt the song.

It sounded very pretty in his childish treble, and Bigamini declared that they should be a great success if they went on as well as they had begun.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

MR. MOLE HAS QUEER FANCIES.

WHEN Jack Harkaway came back to Naples, he was in high spirits.

Harvey, the little coxswain, and Clear-the-Track Sam were all in evening dress in the drawing-room.

They had recovered from the slight wounds they had received in the last encounter with the brigands, and were anxiously waiting to hear the news that Jack would bring with him from the environs of Toro Del Greco, whither he had gone to capture the chief.

Emily had dressed herself and come down to dinner for the first time since her child was stolen.

She was very pale and weak, but her face beamed with the smile of hope.

"Jack's late," said Harvey, looking at his watch. "It is a quarter-past eight, and we dine at eight usually."

"Give him another quarter of an hour," said Walter, "if Mrs. Harvey has no objection."

"Not the slightest, Mr. Campbell," replied Hilda.

"I guess I'm too anxious for the news to be hungry," said Sam. "Who'd have thought the little spy would have split upon his master?"

"It's always the way with low-minded ruffians," replied Harvey. "Take any police case in which some swell burglar is arrested; the police always say they took him from information they received. Someone rounds on his pal."

"My dear Richard," said Hilda, "what strange language to use before ladies."

"I beg pardon, my dear," replied Harvey. "I forgot you were here."

At this moment Ada, Monday's wife, came up and asked if they would have dinner, as the cook said it was quite ready.

"Yes, if you please, Ada," replied Hilda; "I don't think Mr. Harkaway would wish us to wait any longer for him."

Ada went away to order dinner, and just as she came up to announce that it was on the table, Jack sprang up the stairs and bounded into the room.

"Hurrah! here is Harkaway," said the little coxswain.

"Gentlemen," said Jack, pardonably excited at the news he had to communicate, "I have the pleasure to announce that our labours are ended, for Barboni is a prisoner and at this moment in the hands of the police on his way to a Neapolitan prison."

A cheer, such as only British throats can raise, rang through the room and was echoed again and again.

Even the ladies caught the infection, and clapped their hands at the glorious news.

Congratulations poured in upon Jack on all sides.

Nothing was talked about all dinner-time but the capture of the brigand.

They little thought that a few hours later they were to hear of Toro's clever and gallant rescue.

The champagne flowed, and all was jollity and hilarity until the dessert was put on the table.

After a time the ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen to talk over their wine.

"I think," said Jack, "Monday will find the child and then we shall be able to return to England, victorious in everything."

"I'm sorry we didn't capture Barboni in the last fight," said Campbell.

"It would have been more satisfactory," replied Harvey.

"Won't the Neapolitans be wild, rather?" observed Sam.

"I've got a lot of bets on with fellows at the Europa, and they don't want us to nail their brigand."

"Go and have your coffee, then, and collect your debts," said Jack. "Barboni will be in gaol before long."

There was a noise in the passage, a crash, and presently in walked Mr. Mole, looking very gaunt, thin, and ghastly.

"By Jove! Mole's got loose," said Harvey.

"The deuce he has," remarked Jack. "We shall have a bother in getting him back again."

Looking sternly at the assembled company, Mr. Mole seized a bottle and poured out some wine, which he drank.

Then his rigid countenance relaxed, and he said, with an imbecile smile—

“Here’s to you, boys.”

“Sit down, sir. Are you better?” asked Jack.

Mr. Mole’s face clouded again, and he said, striking an attitude—“Base menial! what means this revelry?”

“We’re drinking your health, Mr. Mole.”

“Mole! who’s he? I know not the man,” replied that individual. “Don’t you know me?”

“No, we don’t,” said Jack, with a wink to his friends.

“None of you?”

“No,” said Harvey; “if you are not Mr. Mole, I don’t know you.”

“Who is this Mole?” asked the professor.

“A friend of ours.”

“No matter, let Mole go. I’ll tell you in confidence who I am.”

“Who?”

“I’m Mount Vesuvius in a state of eruption; at least, I’m going to be in eruption presently, and if you don’t pump on me, I shall burn the house down; that’s why I’ve been drinking so much lately. I knew I was going to erupt, and I thought I’d put the fire out.”

“We’ll pump on you, sir,” said Clear-the-Track; “I calculate I’m a good fireman.”

“For Heaven’s sake,” replied Mole, “don’t joke about this matter; it’s getting very serious.”

“Let’s take the gentleman into the garden and put him under the pump,” suggested Sam. “I’ll soon make apple squash of him.”

Mole threw himself into an arm-chair, and took hold of a bottle, at which he sucked quietly.

“Come on,” said the little coxswain; “we’ll pump on you.”

Mr. Mole’s mood changed.

“Not to-day, baker, thank you,” he replied, with a bland smile; “you can call to-morrow with a crusty cottage. I’m very comfortable, and a person of my consideration ought not to be molested by menials. Horace says, *dulce est desipere in loco*, which you may freely translate—it is sweet for a man to sip this wine. Let me sip.”

Jack touched him on the shoulder.

“Come, sir,” he said, “you must go with me.”

"Must! That's a harsh word to employ to a king. Am I a captive monarch?"

"No foolishness."

"I am not aware that I have deserved this language. Who are you?" asked Mole.

"You know me well enough," said Jack.

Mole tapped his forehead.

"Are you the—the Shah?" he asked.

"No."

"Ah! then you are a Carthaginian. No matter, let me sip."

He took another pull at the bottle.

"Put that down, sir," said Jack, authoritatively.

"Avaunt, Carthaginian!" said Mole, angrily, waving his hand.

"You must come with me."

"Let me sip," pleaded Mole.

"You've sipped long enough, and it's for your good that I want to keep you quiet for a few days. Come with me."

"Won't you let me sip?" asked Mole, pleadingly.

"Not now. Come to your room. I'll sit up with you."

"What! A gaoler! A Carthaginian gaoler," said Mole; "this is too much. Must Philip of Macedon and th cousin of the King of Otaheite put up with this?"

Jack turned to his friends.

"Run up to the Café di Europa and see what the Naples swells think of the news, will you?—and I'll look after Mr. Mole. He'll be all right if I keep him away from the lush for a few days," he said.

"All right," replied Harvey, "though I'll stop with Mole, if you'd like to go instead of me."

"No, thanks. Emily is very poorly, and she'd like to have me in the house with her."

The others departed, and with some difficulty, Jack got Mr. Mole up stairs to his bedroom, and sent for a doctor, who administered a sleeping draught to his patient.

This was very strong, and soon took effect upon Mr. Mole's weakened brain.

When Jack saw him in a sound slumber, he locked the door, taking care to remove a razor and a pair of scissors, lest he might injure himself in the night.

He visited his wife and found her much better; she begged him to go to the drawing-room and keep Lily and Hilda

company, as she was going to bed, and she assured him that she would not mope any more and had determined to get well and strong again.

"There is an overruling Providence, Jack dear, and I have been punished for not putting my trust in it," she said.

"I only have you in the world to care for, my love," he said; "and you ought to try to get well, for my sake."

"I will, dearest."

"You don't know how it grieves me to see you like this," he added.

"Get me back my child and quit Naples; that's all the medicine I want," she replied.

"I hope to be able to do so soon," he said, kissing her affectionately.

He went down stairs and found Hilda playing and singing.

She selected Longfellow's "Excelsior!" and when she had finished, she said—

"I always think of you when I sing that song, Mr. Harkaway."

"May I ask why?" asked Jack.

"Because, when you have killed a dozen brigands, you want to kill a dozen more. The meaning of the word, I think is higher."

"Yes," said Jack.

"Well, you are always wanting to achieve something more than you have hitherto done."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I take it as a great compliment."

At this moment the little coxswain rushed into the room,

"What's ruffled your feathers, young one?" he asked.

"There's an awful row at the Café di Europa; come up at once," was the reply.

"Yes."

"There are half-a-dozen Italians to one Englishman. I have left the fun to tell you."

"But Sam and Harvey——"

"Are fighting like bricks."

"By Jove! I'm on," said Jack.

The little coxswain was pale and excited.

Jack did not stop to say anything to the ladies.

He rushed away, put on his hat in the passage and ran along the street with Walter.

"What's the row about?" he asked, as they pelted up the Strada di Toledo.

"We were chaffing the fellows about catching the brigand when the chief of the police came in and said he'd escaped," answered Walter.

"Impossible."

"It's true."

Jack's cheeks blanched and he bit his lips angrily.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"They say this new brigand Toro surprised the soldiers while they were bivouacking."

"I wouldn't have had it happen on any account," said Jack. "What duffers these Italians are."

"That's what we said, and then they insulted us and called us thief catchers, so we pitched in," said the little coxswain.

"I see."

"We were beginning to get the worst of it, and I set off to fetch you thinking you wouldn't like to be out of it."

"Thank you. Come on," answered Jack, hurriedly.

Side by side they ran along until they reached the Café di Europa, from the interior of which sounds of conflict proceeded.

Jack was eager and panting for the fray.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE ROW AT THE CAFE DI EUROPA.

WHEN Jack and Walter entered the café they found every thing in confusion.

Some of the less excitable or more respectable frequenters of the place looked on at the riot or tried to stop it.

But about half a dozen were fighting with Sam and Harvey, who had fixed their backs against the wall and were fighting as only Englishmen can fight.

As Jack put in an appearance, Sam made a rush, crying "Clear the track!" and a couple of Neapolitans rolled over.

Fierce oaths and savage Italian cries rang through the room.

"Down with the English! Turn them out," was heard on all sides.

Jack took a calm view of the scene.

He saw that his two friends were outnumbered, and that they were being badly knocked about.

No amount of talking would have saved them, for the Italians were excited, and each moment a new recruit from the onlookers joined the heavy odds already arrayed against them.

"Do you feel fit?" said Jack to Walter.

"Never felt more like fighting in my life."

"Cut in, then."

Jack turned up his coat sleeves, put his hat a little back on his head, and shouting "Oxford for ever!" attacked the nearest man.

It was like playing at ninepins directly Jack began.

His strong arm was like a poleaxe, and the Neapolitans resembled cattle in the shambles.

Harvey, hearing Jack's voice, plucked up, and it was time that assistance came, for, brave as he was, he could not have held out much longer, as he was pretty well pummelled by the three or four men who were constantly striking at him.

In less than five minutes, the four friends had cleared that part of the room, and the Italians had had enough of it.

They stood glaring at their opponents and chattering like monkeys, afraid to begin again, though there were at least a couple dozen of them.

One Italian drew a knife and brandished it in the air exclaiming—

"I am not afraid of these brigand-hunting Inglesi. They fight like boatmen. We are gentlemen and cannot use our hands as they do. Will either of them have the courage to fight with a knife?"

There was a momentary silence.

"We do not use knives in England," replied Jack.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Italians; "they are cowards. Count Victor is right. They are afraid. Ha! ha! ha!"

Derisive laughter rang through the room and found an echo in every gilded corner.

"We will fight you with our fists, and beat you as we have done already, though you are six to one against us," said Jack.

"No, no; we can't fight with blackguards," answered Count Victor, whose dark, flashing eye gleamed vengefully.

"The knife! the knife!" cried the Italians.

The aspect of affairs was becoming serious, and Jack saw that they would go with tarnished honour if the challenge was not accepted.

Clear-the-Track was cool and collected, seeming to enjoy the excitement which prevailed on all sides of him.

"I guess," he said, "that I know how to use that weapon, so if you'll let me tackle this fellow, Harkaway, I'll top him as a warning to the rest."

"It's my quarrel," replied Jack.

"No; it is not. You weren't here when it began. I reckon I commenced it."

But Jack was obstinate.

He would not give way.

"No," he answered. "They've fixed upon me, thank you all the same for your offer, and I do not feel inclined to show the white feather."

"Take my bowie, then," said Sam.

He handed Jack a handsome bowie-knife, which opened with a snap, the advantage being that when the spring in the back had caught the blade, it held it fast.

The knife could not shut up again and cut his knuckles.

"Do you accept my challenge?" asked the count.

"I do," replied Jack.

Count Victor bowed politely in answer to Jack's acceptance of the challenge, and a scarcely perceptible smile crept round the corner of his well-cut mouth.

He considered that he had his antagonist at a disadvantage.

The count was a tall, thin, eagle, well-made man, who was held in high esteem by his countrymen.

Taking off his coat and waistcoat, he tied a silk handkerchief round his waist, and turning up his right hand shirt sleeve, displayed a white, muscular arm.

Jack disdained to throw off anything, and prepared to fight as he was.

A space was cleared in the centre of the room, the door was locked inside to prevent impertinent interference on the part of the public or the police.

The spectators formed a ring, and betting on the event became brisk, the odds being heavily and freely laid against the Englishman.

When everything was ready, the two men faced one another.

"Are you ready, signor?" asked the count, with perfect ease and politeness.

"Quite," replied Jack.

The duello then commenced.

Jack kept his eye fixed upon that of the Italian, which was bright, liquid, gleaming.

They faced one another for some time and gradually moved, the count going round Jack, and the latter turning slowly so as to keep him well in view.

At length the count came to close quarters.

He made a thrust at Jack, which the latter parried, but not without receiving a cut which ripped up his coat sleeve.

It was a fearful sight to behold those men, with their flashing knives throwing back the light of the many gas lamps, seeking who should spill the other's blood.

Neither the Italians nor the English spoke a word.

"Ha!" cried the count, forcing Jack's guard and thrusting at his heart.

Jack stepped back hurriedly, and felt the point of the knife graze his skin; quickly he threw himself on the Italian, who, not having time to recover himself, presented his left arm to shield his body.

The knife's point ran up his arm from the wrist to the elbow, ripping up the shirt, and leaving a long red mark, from which the blood fell on the floor in a hot, steaming stream.

The pent-up excitement burst out in a deep groan at this untoward hit.

Count Victor's face became convulsed with anger.

His equanimity vanished, and he was at once transformed into a savage, so furious was he at this lucky thrust, which, without crippling him, threatened to weaken him by loss of blood.

Jack now kept himself on the defensive.

His tactics were to exhaust his adversary, who, with demoniac howls, made frantic thrusts at him, springing wildly about, and sa-ha-ing like a professional swordsman.

In spite of his vigilance, Jack received several small wounds, which drew blood, and made him smart with pain.

He saw that he was getting weaker, and he determined to use his great strength.

Accordingly he boldly rushed upon the count.

He seized his wrist, and held it as in a vice with his left hand, but the count managed to wriggle the edge of the knife near his opponent's body, and the blade, cutting through his clothes, grazed his ribs, making a flesh wound.

But he was powerless after this, for Jack still held him tightly, and paused for an opportunity to strike in a place which would not be fatal.

Accordingly he plunged his knife into the count's right shoulder, and the wretched man fell fainting to the ensanguined floor.

The useless knife dropped from his nerveless hand.

With both arms disabled, he was obliged to give up the contest and own himself beaten.

Bestowing a proud look upon the Italians, Jack retired amongst his friends, and sat down.

As he walked, he left a trail of blood behind him, for his clothes were saturated, and he was bleeding freely.

"Bravo, Jack," exclaimed Harvey. "You did that in fine style. By Jove! it's the most plucky thing I ever saw you do."

"Are you much hurt?" asked the little coxswain.

"I am battered a bit," replied Jack.

Sam approached with a cup of wine, which he handed to him.

"Heroes ain't above drinking, I guess," he said.

Jack drank the wine eagerly.

"Call a coach, Dick," he said to Harvey. "I must get home and stop this bleeding, or I shall be as weak as a rat to-morrow."

Harvey spoke to one of the waiters, who went in search of a fiacre.

Count Victor meanwhile had been raised by his disconsolate and chopfallen friends.

He was suffering the most acute agony from the two jobbing blows he had received in the shoulder, each of which had penetrated to the bone and cut through important veins and muscles.

His oaths and curses were painful to listen to.

He called the saints to witness that he would have a fearful revenge for the defeat he had sustained.

One of the frequenters of the café was a doctor, and he attended to the count's wounds.

He had not the courtesy, however, to extend the offer of his surgical skill to Harkaway.

Presently the fiacre rolled up to the door.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Jack. "I beg to thank you sincerely for the little amusement you have been so good as to offer me this evening. I shall not forget you, believe me."

The four men got into the coach, and were driven in a few minutes to the Strada di Toledo.

When Jack was landed, Harvey set off again in search of a doctor.

Jack requested to be put in a room on the ground floor, so that the ladies might not be alarmed.

Especially he was anxious that Emily should not hear that he had been fighting a duel and was wounded, though in reality his hurts were not of a serious nature.

But a wife's ears are very sharp, and hearing the men come in, Emily became alarmed when Jack did not appear.

She had gone to bed, but quickly wrapping herself in a dressing-gown, she ran downstairs before anyone could stop her.

Jack had stripped to the waist, and Walter was busily engaged in sponging the cuts, having a basin of warm water on a chair, and counting the wounds.

"He's grazed you pretty well about the ribs, and touched you with the point, too, all over," said the little coxswain.

"How many digs has he given me?" asked Jack.

"I've counted fifteen. Got any below the waist?"

"One in the right thigh, I think. It feels stiff."

"That makes sixteen. What a fight it was, eh!" said Walter.

At this moment Emily entered the room.

She shuddered at the ghastly spectacle Harkaway presented, his naked body being cut about in a fantastic manner, and the blood still issuing from the slashing wounds.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, tearfully.

"My dear Emmy," replied Jack, "this is wrong. You should not have done this."

"How could I help it? You know how I love you, dearest, and I feared something had happened. Are you dangerously hurt?"

"Chuck a towel or two over me, Walter," said Jack.

The little coxswain did so.

"There is no harm done, dear, beyond what a little diachylon sticking plaster will soon put right," he went on.

"The doctor is expected every minute, so you mustn't fret."

"How did it happen?"

"The boys got into a row at the Café di Europa. Harvey and Sam were getting the worst of it, and they sent for me. I was obliged to look after my boys, you know, Emmy."

"Well?"

"I had to polish off the 'furrineers,' and a Count Victor challenged me to fight with knives. He's sorry for it now."

"Is he dead?" asked Emily, trembling again.

"No. I might have killed him if I'd liked, mightn't I, young one?"

"Yes, twice over," answered the coxswain.

"Oh, Jack, dear, dear Jack, when will all these troubles be over?" said Emily. "I am not so strong as I was once, and you are so brave that I never know what may happen. I am always nervous about you, and this place is killing me."

"We shall soon go away, my pet," replied Jack.

"Really?"

"Most certainly. All we have to do is to find the child, and see Barboni die on the scaffold, then ho! for England once more. By the way, have you seen Monday?"

"No, he hasn't returned yet, and his wife, Ada, is very anxious about him. Oh! Jack, this life amidst constant excitement may be very agreeable to you men, but it is death to poor, weak little women."

Jack was going to reply, but a sudden faintness came over him.

He dropped his head back, and gasped for breath.

"Ta—take her away," he murmured.

The next moment he fell back on the bed, and became insensible.

Brave and strong as he was, his constitution was not made of cast-iron, and he felt the inevitable effect of loss of blood, pain, and excitement.

Just then, the doctor entered with Harvey, who conducted Emily to her own room, giving her in charge of Hilda and Lily.

Jack's wounds were attended to, he was put to bed, and the doctor had an interview with the anxious wife, assuring her that there was no danger, and quieting her fears.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

HUNSTON AMUSES AN IDLE HOUR.

WHEN Hunston was conducted to the cave by the sea-shore, Toro advised him not to say any thing which might irritate Barboni.

"The old lion has had his claws cut," he remarked, "but there is a kick in him yet; he bares his gums, shows his teeth, and would bite if he could see where to plant them."

"I'm not afraid of him," replied Hunston.

They made their way over the rocks and entered the cave, in which the brigands had prepared such a dinner as their desperate position would allow them.

Fish caught in holes of the rocks, and goat's meat plundered from the peasantry, did not make a bad meal, helped out with black bread and swine's flesh, and washed down with a draught of wine.

Barboni sat sullenly by himself, eating what was given him in silence.

At length he recognised Hunston's voice.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I hear tones I used to know well. Is Hunstoni among you?"

"I'm here, *caro mio*," replied Hunston. "Shake hands and be friends."

"You robbed and deserted me in my hour of need," said Barboni. "Is Toro here?"

"Not far off, old lion," answered the brigand.

"You are my friend? Have Hunstoni shot?"

Toro laughed aloud and replied—

"No, no, we can't do that sort of thing. Hunstoni is my guest; he will go away again to-night, and his life is sacred in my eyes as he has not been a traitor and he has broken bread with me."

"Shoot the scoundrel!" roared Barboni. "Give me a pistol; I will rid the earth of a villain myself."

"Shut up, you old fool," said Hunston. "I'll put a bullet in you, in a brace of shakes, you imbecile."

Barboni took up the glass he had been drinking out of,

and threw it in the direction from which Hunston's voice proceeded.

Being blind, he could not take good aim, and it shattered itself against the adjoining rock.

"Don't destroy the crockery, Barboni," said Toro, mildly. "That's our only glass, and we shall have to drink out of the bottle now. Cospetto! you are not the Prince di Villanova, in Castel Inferno. Where the deuce do you get your extravagant ideas from?"

Barboni sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"All are against me—all," he muttered with a sob.

Hunston lighted a pipe, and drank some more wine.

"Been on the road lately?" he asked.

"We've had no time since we rescued Barboni from the soldiers," answered Toro.

"It's devilish slow here," said Hunston; "suppose we amuse an idle hour?"

"I should like it. Per Baccho!" replied the giant stretching his brawny limbs, "that is just what I want; laziness kills me."

"How are you off for cash?"

"But poorly. We have had no luck lately."

"What do you say to stopping the mail train, which passes a spot not far from here at mid-day?" said Hunston.

"Corpo di Christo!" swore the Herculean brigand, "that idea never occurred to me."

"Will you do it?"

"If you assist."

"I'll do more; I'll lead. It is my suggestion. You and your men come with me at once, armed with axes and revolvers, and I'll show you how to rob a train," said Hunston.

The brigand was delighted with the idea, and gave orders for his small band to be in readiness at once.

Barboni listened to all that was going on in a sulky sort of manner, and when he had gathered from the conversation that an expedition was being planned, his old spirit was warmed up, and he was anxious to make one of the party.

To stop and rob the mail train was a grand enterprise, which was just the sort of thing he liked.

Now he felt the bitterness of being blind.

In the agony of his heart he said to himself—

"Better were I dead than like this."

"We shan't be long, old lion," said Toro.

"I would give ten years of my life to go with you," replied Barboni.

"It is useless. You can not see, and you would be in the way," remarked Hunston.

The brigands went away, leaving Barboni swearing like a pagan, half out of his mind, and vowing that he would have a fearful revenge upon Hunston before long.

Hunston had a time-table with him, which he had bought with a view of escaping by train, an idea he was forced to abandon when he found that the station was watched by the police to prevent any of the brigands from getting away.

A large tree grew close to the line, and Hunston calculated that if it was cut down, it would fall over the metals.

Pointing to it, he said to the brigands who were armed with axes—

"Cut it down, quick; the mail is due in fifteen minutes."

Two men placed themselves on either side of the tree.

Soon the axes were raised high above their shoulders and flashed through the air, coming in contact with the wood, and causing a dull thudding echo to result.

"Hark!" cried Hunston, putting his hand to his ear.

The steady beat of the engine was heard, and the rattle of the train as it came through a cutting some miles off.

"The train, the train!" exclaimed the brigands.

"Cut away for your lives!" cried Hunston.

The noise of the approaching train came rapidly nearer and yet more near.

At length it was visible at the edge of a curve.

On came the panting Behemoth, dragging after it a dozen carriages and a guard's brake.

Crash!

The tree fell, and luckily tumbled across the line, where it completely blocked both the six-foot and the permanent way.

There was a shrill whistle, prolonged and terrible.

The driver of the engine had seen the impediment in his path and turned on the steam whistle.

Suddenly it ceased.

He merely meant it as a signal to the guard to put on the brake, and the next moment the steam was shut off and the engine reversed.

The engine-driver and his mate, seeing that a collision with the tree was now inevitable, jumped off the engine.

Presently the train, going at a very reduced speed, struck the tree, and the engine bounded over it, coming to a standstill until the carriages bumped up against it and turned it on its side.

The brigands now rushed to the carriages.

Screams and groans came from every carriage, for though no one was killed, most of the passengers were badly bruised and knocked about.

Some had limbs broken by the terrible shock.

It was an easy task for Toro and his men to collect the valuables that the injured and panic-stricken passengers had about them.

Hunston directed his attention to the van, where he found the guard sitting on a box.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"What you shan't have," replied the guard, resolutely.

Hunston levelled his revolver at him and shot him dead.

"That's soon settled," he muttered.

His next care was to open the box, in which he found eight bags of gold, which he fastened together with a cord and slung round his neck.

The weight was so great that he bent under it.

"Retreat!" he shouted.

Toro and his men instantly left the ruined train and joined Hunston, who quickly led the way to the sea-shore.

The passengers were unarmed, and had they not been, they were too much frightened and hurt to follow the robbers, who retired unmolested with their plunder.

When they reached the cave, the gold was divided in equal shares, as well as the jewellery, and Hunston was able to fill a second belt with his ill-gotten gains.

He was now a rich man.

But it was a question whether he would ever get away to enjoy it, as the coast was closely watched, and he had no doubt the police were on the lookout for him.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE STROLLING MUSICIANS.

WE must now devote our attention to Bigamini and young Jack, whom we left trudging along the road, under a hot and burning sun.

The first village they came to was a small one.

All the young and middle-aged men had gone to work in the fields, and only the women and old men remained with the children.

Tootle ! Tootle !

Bigamini began to play on his flute, and a crowd of ragged urchins came round them.

The little fellow began to sing Verdi's melody "*Ah ! che la morte*," and sang it plaintively and well in his childish treble.

In a whining tone, Bigamini said—

"For the love of Heaven, give us some food ; me and my boy are very poor and hungry. God will bless you, kind people, for your charity to the poor singers."

This appeal was productive of a very plentiful crop of bread and fruit, meat being scarce among the peasants, who had not enjoyed a particularly good harvest.

While they were eating their breakfast under a tree, not forgetting to feed the wolf, an incident happened which Bigamini did not bargain for—a black man passed by them.

He was apparently bent upon the same errand as themselves, for he was nearly naked and looked like a beggar.

Bigamini no sooner cast eyes on the black man than he hastily crammed his bread and fruit into his pocket and prepared to move.

"Come along, Master Jack," he said, in a low tone, "we must not waste time ; your pa and ma are expecting you."

But young Jack's eyes were as sharp as his.

"I shan't go," he cried. "That's Monday, my papa's black servant."

"Nonsense !" replied Bigamini. "How could Monday get here ? It's a bogey ; look how all the people run away from him."

"Monday !" cried the child, "Mon——"

His further utterance was checked by a heavy box on the ears, which Bigamini kindly and paternally bestowed upon him.

"Hold your row," he said, "or I'll murder you."

The black, however, had heard the cry and turned round.

It was Monday.

He saw young Jack, and with a yell of delight, rushed in his direction.

Monday had been on the tramp for several days, and having started without any money, he had found it difficult to procure food.

He was half starved.

The peasantry did not like the look of him ; much rather would they have seen a brigand.

Being very superstitious, and unaccustomed to the sight of black people, they thought he was an evil spirit and would bring them no luck, so they drove him away very often with curses.

He had determined not to return home until he could bring his master some news of his missing child.

Many miles had he wandered.

At last good fortune brought him just in the very nick of time to save the boy from the clutches of Bigamini, who would have taken him far away, so that he would not have gladdened his parents' eyes for many a long month to come.

Monday made a bound towards the tree, and cried—

"Ho ! you Bigamy thief, what do you do with young Mast' Jack ?"

He caught the child in his arms, and kissed him tenderly.

"Mast' Jack, Mast' Jack !" he said. "This one great day. Bless um little heart, um found him at last."

Bigamini had torn his clothes to rags, but he had not thrown away his pistol.

While the black was occupied with the child, he drew it, and levelling it in a hurry, fired.

Fortunately the wolf, thinking he meant some harm to the child, jumped up and bit his arm.

The shot flew harmlessly over his intended victim's head.

"Cuss the luck !" muttered Bigamini.

Dropping the child, Monday flew at the wretched spy, and catching him in a powerful grasp, threw him against the trunk of the tree, where he fell stunned and bleeding.

Monday took the child's hand and retreated, saying—
 "Come along, Mast' Jack."

Bigamini was frantic with rage and despair.

He followed at a distance, hoping that some accident would again throw the child into his power, and as he went, he bewailed his hard luck.

"Who'd have thought that cussed infernal black would have come up like a Jack-in-the-box to crab me?" he muttered, almost crying with vexation.

As they walked along, the child told Monday the history of his wanderings, and how he had made up his mind never to part with his wolf.

"You shall keep um wolf, sare," replied Monday.

"Is Bigamy a bad man?" asked young Jack.

"Him awful bad, sare; so bad, him like um debbil."

"Was he not taking me to see my papa?"

"No, him go t'other way, sare; me come up just in time. Bigamy is a brigand; he steal you, Mast' Jack."

His wanderings had made Monday well acquainted with the country, and he knew that they were not far from Pompeii, from whence there was a railway to Naples.

"Um got any money, Mast' Jack?" asked Monday, who recollected that he could not travel by railway without paying the fare.

"I've got a gold piece with a hole in it tied round my neck, which mamma gave me," replied Master Jack.

"Give um here."

"You can have it if you like, though I would rather not part with my mamma's present."

"Get plenty more, sare," said Monday, as he unfastened the coin, and going into the station, took two tickets for Naples.

In a short time they arrived in the city, and made their way to the house in the Strada.

Jack was still in bed, his wounds being very stiff; and Emily was sitting by his side, holding a bunch of grapes for her husband to eat the luscious berries.

Suddenly Monday burst into the room, followed by young Jack and the wolf, who would not leave his little master for a moment.

"Here him come, sare," cried Monday, rapturously.
 "um found Mast' Jack and brought um back safe, sare."

The next moment the boy was clasped in his mother's

arms, and she was shedding tears of joy over her lost one, now so opportunely found.

Jack was equally delighted.

"My darling! my darling!" cried Emily, covering his face with kisses. "I will never let you out of my sight again. Thank God for this."

Jack held out his hand to Monday.

"I can never thank you enough," he said.

"That all right, Mast' Jack," said Monday. "Um say not come back without him. Just in time, though; that debbil Bigamy got him."

The black proceeded to tell all he knew, and the wolf, as if he thought he ought to be taken some notice of, jumped on the bed.

"Oh! the horrid creature," cried Emily; "kill him, he will injure my child; kill the wild beast."

"No, mamma," said young Jack; "that's my pet. You mustn't kill him."

Young Jack patted the wolf on the head, and the animal licked his hand affectionately.

All Emily's fear vanished when she heard how kind the creature had been to the boy, and she even ventured so far as to pat and stroke him herself.

All was rejoicing and happiness in the house now.

Jack was soon able to get up.

"All we have to do now," he said to his friends, "is to bring Barboni to the scaffold, and then we can quit Naples with the full consciousness of having kept our vow and swept away the curse of brigandage from this fair country."

Emily sighed when she heard this.

A determination to hunt to the foot of the scaffold the desperate man already driven to bay, meant exposure to fresh perils, and she knew not what misery in the future.

"Is it not enough that you have crippled his power, destroyed his band, and that he is blind and helpless?" she said.

"No."

"What more do you want?"

"The villain's life."

"He deserves to die for his crimes, and no doubt vengeance will overtake him in time. Can not you leave Barboni's punishment to Heaven?" she asked.

"I believe, my dear," said Jack, "that I am the chosen

instrument in the hands of Heaven, and I will not give up until he dies upon the scaffold."

"Can not you find out where he is hiding?"

"Up to the present time, all our efforts have been baffled, but we hope to be successful soon."

"He seems quiet enough," remarked Emily.

"Yes, but the fire is only smouldering. Such men as Hunston and Toro can not keep quiet long. They will do something violent soon, and then we shall get scent of the old fox's hiding-place," said Jack.

As if to give confirmation to his words the little coxswain entered.

"Great news!" he said.

"What?"

"A band of brigands, led by two men who answer the description of Toro and Hunston, has stopped the mail train and robbed the passengers, murdered the guard, and carried off a lot of gold in bags."

"By Jove!" said Jack, "just what I expected."

"They threw a tree across the line, and many of the passengers are seriously injured," cried Walter.

"Where did this happen?" asked Jack.

"Not far from Portici."

"Ah, that is a direction in which we have not searched; we have stuck too much to the old lines. Kiss me, Emily. We shall soon have them all now; this is what I have been waiting for."

Young Jack put his hand on his father's knee.

"You going to fight Barboni, papa?" he said.

"Yes, my lad," replied Jack, patting his curly head.

"You take me and my wolf, will you?"

"Not this time," said Jack, with a smile.

Young Jack looked deeply disappointed, and Emily caught him in her arms, straining him to her breast, as if she feared the brigands might again tear him from her.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE ESCAPE OF HUNSTON.

A JAR of brandy had been brought out of a corner by Toro, and the brigands drank deeply after their success in robbing the train.

Hunston's health was proposed and heartily received.

The only one who did not share in the general hilarity was Barboni.

He sat sulkily aloof at the extremity of the cave, and seemed to be as deaf to all that was going on around him as he was blind.

It galled him to think that he could not participate in the expedition of Toro.

Utterly disregarding him, the others continued their carouse.

Hunston became elated with drink.

Seizing Toro's hand, he exclaimed, "I like you, Bill."

"And I like you, caro mio," replied the herculean brigand.

"Are you particularly fond of this place?"

"Not over much."

"You are not wedded to it; you haven't planted yourself to grow up into a full-blown gallows bird when the Bersaglieri catch you," continued Hunston.

"I suppose that is what I must expect to be some day or other, but it is not kind of you, signor, to remind me of my probable destiny," said Toro.

He shrugged his shoulders as a scarcely perceptible shudder crept over him.

"Would you like to leave Naples?" said Hunston.

"If you get away safely to-night, what are your plans?" asked Toro, evading the question.

"I've altered them," said Hunston, lowering his voice so that Barboni could not hear what he said.

"Well?"

Toro evinced considerable curiosity to hear what his companion had to say.

"I have arranged a passage in a brig lying off the point," said Hunston. "She is laden with wine and oil; her crew are only eleven hands all told."

"Well?" ejaculated Toro again.

"I meant to have taken my hook in her to England, but if you and your men will come with me, we'll play a bigger game."

"Ha!" said Toro, who began to see.

"We will cut the throats of the crew, and chuck their bodies overboard."

"Good."

"Having possession of the vessel, we can go where we like, and if we cook up fictitious papers, no one will suspect us if we get a few thousand miles away."

"But," said Toro, "I am no sailor."

"What of that?"

"Nor my men either. On land they are as brave as lions, but on board ship——"

"Humbug, I tell you," interrupted Hunston, with a gesture of contempt. "I am an old salt, and I'll work the ship if you and your fellows will do what I tell them."

"You may rely upon that," replied Toro.

"Do you like the plan?"

"In a word," said Toro, "you propose that we should turn pirates."

"Not exactly. We will trade when it suits us, and we will rob when it is more convenient," continued Hunston.

Toro then engaged in earnest conversation with his men for a short time, and his arguments did not fail to convince them of the advantage held out in Hunston's scheme.

They jumped at the chance of having a ship of their own and sailing on the bright blue sea.

"It's all right," replied Toro, returning. "I knew the fellows would follow me anywhere."

"Are they all agreed?" asked Hunston.

"All."

"Here's jolly good luck to our new venture," said Hunston emptying his glass.

"I have always been kind to my men," exclaimed Toro; "they love me as a father."

"Barboni made a mistake in always being a tyrant and a bully. He thought no more of shooting a man than he did of eating his dinner," said Hunston.

"He had a larger band than mine," observed Toro, "and brigands are not easy to manage."

"No matter, kindness goes a long way."

"What about Barboni?" asked Toro.

"Oh, let him rip. What's the good of the old owl?"

"Won't you take him?"

"You'll ask me to tie a corpse round my neck next," answered Hunston, with a brutal laugh.

"I don't quite like the idea of Barboni being left here to starve," remarked Toro.

"What does it matter to us?" replied Hunston.

"Well, well, I'll be hard."

"That's your sort, my sucking Hercules. I can see I shall make something of you by and bye," said Hunston.

The brigands received their orders in a low tone, which were to go down to the beach and wait for the appearance of the boatmen, who had been heavily bribed to once more undertake the perilous task of conveying Hunston to the brig which was lying outside the Possilippo point.

Hunston accompanied them.

Toro was the last to leave the cave, and he had lingered for a purpose of his own.

There was much to admire about the character of the "old lion," as he called Barboni.

For years the name of Barboni had been a name of terror throughout the whole Italian peninsula.

When Toro was comparatively a young man, his blood had been fired by hearing stories of the daring and bravery of Barboni.

Had he never heard of Barboni, perhaps he might never have become a brigand.

To the young Italian, the "old lion" was a hero of romance.

It cut him to the heart to leave him penniless, friendless, and alone.

The chief, once so mighty, now so fallen, was sitting disconsolately at the end of the cave.

He was inwardly chafing at his lot.

His lips moved and twitched, his fists were clenched, and his brows bent over his eyes.

Toro came up to him, and touched his shoulder.

"Old lion," he said, in his rough, cheery voice.

"Ah! Toro," said Barboni, "is it you? I have one friend left in you; all the others have deserted me."

"Good old lion," replied Toro, "take this; it is——"

"Money," cried Barboni, hastily. "What is this for?"

"You will want it. I'm going away for—for some days, and you'll have to shift for yourself."

"Going away—going to leave me," said Barboni terrified. "This is Hunston's doing. *Corpo di Baccho!* I warmed a serpent when I took him in. But why should you go? What have I done?"

"Nothing."

"No offence?" asked Barboni.

"None, old lion. Duty calls us. You will find stores in the cave enough for a month. In this locker you will find ship's biscuits; in this other, wine and spirits; and in this, salt beef. The money is for you when all is gone."

"You have told me a lie," said Barboni, sadly; "you said you were going for a few days, on some duty. You tell me I have provisions for a month, and then add that the money is for my use when the provisions are gone."

"*Cospetto*, old lion!" stammered Toro, "you're rather sharp upon a fellow."

"No matter," replied Barboni. "I know that I am left to my fate in my hour of need. No longer pipe, no longer dance. That is the way of the world. Go, good Toro. I thank thee from the bottom of my heart."

"You see, old lion," said Toro, "if you weren't blind——"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Barboni, solemnly. "Never remind a man of the afflictions sent him by Heaven. Perhaps my blindness is a punishment for what men call my crimes. No matter. I am not yet conquered, and I tell you, good Toro, that my heart is big enough to bear this blow."

"Bravo, old lion; give us your paw," said Toro.

"I will shake hands with you, for you are good to me," said Barboni, jingling the gold in his left palm.

There was a pause.

"*Adio!*" continued Barboni, in a low tone.

"Good-bye, old lion; good luck to you. Keep up your spirits," said Toro.

The next minute he was hurrying over the rocks, in the direction taken by the others.

Punctual to the appointment, the two boatmen were on the spot, nor were they surprised to see the friends that Hunston had brought with him.

The chase of the preceding night had frightened them not a little, and the more there were to fight the police in the event of a fresh pursuit, the better for them.

A vigilant lookout was kept, but nothing was seen of the police galley.

An hour's pull brought the boat to the corner of the point, and the silver moon enabled the rowers to see the brig lying at anchor within the distance of a mile.

"Pull away, lads. That's our ship," said Hunston, standing up and handling the tiller with a practised hand.

"Viva Hunstoni e Toro! Viva! viva!" cried the brigands in chorus.

The two boatmen looked curiously and suspiciously around.

They knew that they were helping a brigand to escape, and guessed that his companions were of the same cut-throat trade.

It was evident also that some villainy was in contemplation, but as they were well paid for what they were doing, it mattered little to them what happened.

Their orders were concise.

"Pull alongside," said Hunston, "and when you see the last of me in the chains, drop astern."

"Aye, aye, signor," replied the head boatman.

Each man had received his instructions before starting.

It was determined that an attack should be made in the night, as the crew would be off their guard.

The ship did not sail before morning, and it was probable that the captain was enjoying his last hours ashore in some trattoria with his officers and a boat's crew.

This surmise of Hunston's turned out correct.

The ship was neared.

A man on the lookout said, in a drowsy voice, "Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy there!" replied Hunston.

"What are you?"

"We bring you a passenger who hasn't forgotten the grog, and you'll be able to splice the mainbrace before the captain comes aboard."

"You're welcome, shipmate," replied the lookout; "steer by her headlight. So, larboard side, ship your oars. So. Gently does it."

The brigands held their knives in their mouths, and headed by Hunston and Toro, sprang up the chains like monkeys.

The watch crowded round to welcome the passenger who had been so considerate as to bring his grog with him.

What was their consternation when they were fiercely attacked and cut down without the slightest warning or provocation.

One after another fell mortally wounded.

Not a word was spoken by the brigands, who went at their bloodthirsty work with the coolness of practised butchers.

The deck became slippery with blood.

Hearing the heavy falls, the mate and the remainder of the crew rushed up the mainhatch only to meet with the awfully sudden fate of their ill-starred companions.

They were hacked to pieces, and being unarmed, were unable to strike a blow in their own defence.

When the butchery was over, Hunston ordered the bodies to be cast overboard.

An examination of the ship was then made.

Only a cabin-boy was found asleep in the forecastle, and his life was spared, because he was too young to be mischievous, and it was thought he might be useful.

In fact they derived some valuable information from him.

The captain and five others were ashore, but were expected at the ebb of the tide, which would take place about four in the morning.

It was then eleven.

A strong breeze had sprung up from the land, and Hunston ordered the sails to be set immediately.

There were two Italians and some foreign men-of-war in the bay, and it would have been dangerous to remain and court notice from them.

The brig could make good sailing, but she would have succumbed easily in a few hours to a powerful steamer.

The anchor was weighed, the sails set, and the ship glided unperceived from the spot where she had been lying.

Hunston took command of the vessel.

As for Toro, he was a complete child upon the ocean, though he could do a great deal on land.

It must be admitted that he was willing to aid Hunston, and that he did not feel at all jealous at being second in command.

Before daybreak the ship was far from the Italian coast.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MR. MOLE'S DISCOVERY.

ON the morning following the shocking crime we have just narrated, a very happy party was assembled round the breakfast table of the house in the Strada Di Toledo.

Every thing had gone well lately with the English.

The roses had returned to Emily's cheeks since the dispersal of the brigands and the restoration of her darling child.

She was quite well and strong again.

It had come about that Lily Cockles was so pleased with the little coxswain for avenging her brother's death by killing Gus Darrel that she listened favourably to his suit.

They were engaged to be married.

Mr. Mole was quite well again, and his illness acted as a warning to him not to drink too much, and he very rarely plunged into excess, and then only when he spent an evening with Monday in his pantry, talking about old times.

Monday came in while the party were at breakfast.

Every body looked up eagerly.

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Me go out this morning, sare, to buy some of um fish for breakfast, and they all talk about brigands taking um ship."

"Capturing a ship! Where?"

"In um bay, sare. They kill all um could, 'cept captain, and two three others who on shore, and then they bolt with um ship. So um say."

"By Jove! that must be Hunston," said Harvey.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Jack; "the news, though, requires confirmation."

"I wonder," said the little coxswain, "if they have taken Barboni with them."

"Trust Hunston for not being a fool," answered Jack. "He wouldn't be bothered with a blind man who could never do him any good."

"Hunston was always a hard-hearted and perverse child of sin," remarked Mr. Mole.

"Well, gentlemen," said Jack, "I must go out and hear the news; who'll come with me? Don't all speak at once."

"I will," replied Harvey and Sam, in a breath.

"I have promised to go with Mr. Mole," said Walter; "we have a little geological expedition on hand."

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Geology," replied Mr. Mole, "as you ought to know, Harkaway, is the science or 'logic' of the earth, from the Greek word——"

"In fact," interrupted Jack, "you mean you're going to break stones with a hammer, and see what's inside them."

"That's it," replied Walter, laughing.

The party broke up.

Emily took Jack on one side.

"Have you written a reply to the colonel?" she asked.

"No, dear," he replied.

"What shall you say?"

"I intend to throw up my commission," he answered.

"Oh!" said Emily, "I am so sorry. Is it not a pity you let this wretched brigand interfere with your professional prospects?"

"I can't help it, Emmy dear," said Jack. "I must keep my oath, and I don't leave Naples till I see the end of that villain Barboni."

"But——"

"That's flat. It's no use talking."

Emily knew Jack's determined character too well to argue the point with him, and she walked away with a sigh.

Mr. Mole and Walter supplied themselves with a couple of hammers and a basket in which to place specimens of valuable fossils they might be fortunate enough to find, and started for a walk along the shore.

After walking a few miles several specimens of remarkable fossils were collected, and the rocks becoming rather difficult to travel over, the little coxswain proposed a halt.

Selecting a shady spot, he lighted his pipe, and producing a flask, the geologists refreshed themselves.

"I've had enough of it!" exclaimed Walter, "and shall stay here until you are done."

"Very well," replied Mr. Mole. "I'll just explore the rocks about here, and then we will return."

"Look out for brigands," said Walter. "It was somewhere near this spot that the police galley was attacked."

"I never felt fear in my life," said Mole, grandly, "and I am not going to begin now."

He climbed over the rocks, holding an umbrella to protect his head from the burning sun, until he came to an opening in the rock.

It was the mouth of a cave.

The opportunity seemed favourable for exploring, and satisfying himself that the water was low, and would not come up high enough for some hours to cut off his retreat, he boldly entered.

A good light poured into the cave, which enabled Mr. Mole to see that there was a man seated on a block of stone at the extremity.

"Who goes there? Is it you, good Toro?" said the man, whose quick ears detected the sound of an intrusion.

"I am not Toro," replied Mole.

"Who are you, then—friend or foe?"

"That depends upon who you are," said Mole. "Don't attempt any nonsense, I've got a pistol."

"I am unarmed," was the reply, with an impatient sigh, "and were my belt bristling with weapons, I could do you little harm, because I am blind"

"Blind!" repeated Mole, starting.

He had heard that the famous brigand had lost his sight and was a companion of Toro.

Could his good fortune have guided his footsteps in the direction of the brigand chief?

If so, he would have accomplished what neither Harkaway nor all the police in Naples had succeeded in.

"Are you Barboni?" asked Mole.

"I am that unfortunate being," was the calm reply.

The brigand drew himself up with dignity, folded his arms, and turned his sightless orbs in the direction of the intruder's voice.

"Hang me if I didn't think so," said Mole. "Won't Walter be wild when he finds he is out of this? Bravo, Mole, this is a feather in your cap, sir."

"Do with me what you like," said Barboni.

"It requires consideration," replied Mole. "Are you alone?"

"Quite."

"You are sure that none of your cut-throat associates are

likely to come back?" asked Mole, exhibiting a slight nervousness.

"There is no chance of that. They have all left me."

"All?"

"Every one," said Barboni.

"Can you give me any information respecting a party or the name of Hunston, with whom I was formerly acquainted?"

"He has gone with Toro, after insulting and robbing me."

"Ah, he was always a bad lot," said Mr. Mole.

"You speak Italian with a foreign accent," said Barboni.

"Are you English?"

"I am."

"Then, sir," said Barboni, "I suppose my hour has come. I may as well die at once as linger on in misery, to perish of neglect and starvation, aggravated by a broken heart."

"I feel sorry for you," said Mole.

"Does that sentiment come from your heart?" asked Barboni, eagerly.

"Certainly it does. I once saw a wounded lion, and at another time an eagle with a broken wing. Those creatures were types of fallen grandeur in their way, and I felt sorry for them."

"I should like you to do me a favour. It will be the last I shall ever ask of mortal man," said Barboni.

"Name it."

"Let me explain first why I make the request."

"Certainly," replied Mole.

"I should like to avoid a public execution, following upon a tiresome trial, and it would give me pleasure to baulk Mr. Harkaway of his triumph."

"Yes, yes; that is only natural."

"Will you, sir, take out your pistol, place the muzzle to my head as I sit here, and finish me out of hand?"

"No," replied Mole, decisively, "I will not."

The expression of hope which had lighted up the brigand's face died out, leaving his features a blank again.

"You refuse?"

"Decidedly I do, and for this reason. I never, in the course of all my wanderings, took a life in cold blood."

"But I ask you to take mine," urged Barboni.

"That makes very little difference, and scarcely removes the affair from the crime of deliberate murder," said Mole.

"Say no more; I am your prisoner. Load me with chains

and drag me in triumph into Naples. It will be a glorious deed to have captured the poor, blind brigand."

The sarcasm was not lost upon Mole.

"You judge me wrongly again," he said.

"How?"

"By supposing that I should be guilty of such meanness."

"Speak plainly, man," cried Barboni, impatiently, "and do not torture me with suspense. What are you going to do with me?"

"I shall leave you as I found you."

"But you will send the police here."

"Not at all. I pity you as a fallen foe, and I respect you as a brave man, though you have outraged humanity," said Mole.

"Sir," replied Barboni, "I thank you; your generosity is that of a true-bred gentleman."

"I am not a preacher," continued Mole. "But there is such a thing as repentance."

"I never repented one act of my life," replied Barboni, fiercely.

"Consider," said Mole, "that forgiveness of sin is——"

"Rubbish! *Santo Dio!* am I a woman to listen to such tales? Go, sir, leave me to my misery and my solitude. I would be alone."

"I wish you a happy issue out of all your afflictions," said Mole, kindly.

He was about to retire when the brigand spoke.

"Your name, sir?" he said.

"My name is Mole."

"Thank you. It shall be the last on my lips, and I shall remember it as that of a generous and true gentleman. *Adio, amico mio.*"

Mr. Mole now left the cave, very much excited at the strange scene which had just taken place.

It had cost him a struggle to forego the capture of the brigand chief.

But the higher qualities of his nature had asserted themselves, and he thought he should have been a coward to betray the poor, broken-down, blind creature into the hands of his enemies.

When he reached the little coxswain, the latter saw that something unusual had happened.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Up the rocks," replied Mole.

"I lost sight of you."

"Very likely."

"I say, you've had a bad scare; what have you seen?" said Walter.

"Don't ask me any questions," replied Mr. Mole.

"Now look here, what is it?"

There was no answer.

"Brigands?"

Still Mr. Mole was silent.

If he answered he would betray Barboni, and he intended to keep the secret.

"If you won't speak, you'd better go home," said Walter.

"That's what I mean to do," replied Mole; "you will come with me, of course."

"No."

"You won't?"

"Not just yet. I want to finish my pipe."

"All right, I will leave you," said Mole; glad of a chance of getting away without being subjected to further questioning.

He did not think it likely that Walter Campbell would explore the rocks, or, if he did, that he would find the cave.

But this was just what the young gentleman intended to do.

Walter for a little time lazily watched the smoke curl up from the bowl of his pipe, and listened to the noise made by the incoming tide, as the waves beat restlessly on the shore.

But when Mole was out of sight, he got up and stretched himself.

Two men in a boat were rowing along towards Naples.

They were boatmen on the lookout for a fare.

Seeing Walter extend his arms, they thought he was signalling them to stop.

"Want a boat, signor?" said one. "Take you back to Naples for three ducats."

"Done, with you," said Walter, glad of the chance. "But first of all beach your boat and come here."

The two men did as he directed them, and advanced, respectfully saluting him by touching their caps.

"Follow me up these rocks," he said.

The men hesitated.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked.

"They say there are brigands up there, signor."

"Where?"

"In a cave."

"As I suspected," replied Walter. "Well, stay where you are till I come back."

He looked at his pistol, saw it was capped and ready for firing.

Then he climbed over the rocks in the direction he had seen Mr. Mole take.

After a time he came to the entrance to the cave and peered in.

He saw a man whom he instantly recognised as Barboni.

The brigand was groping about the cave as if he wished to find something.

At last he uttered a cry of joy.

His hand had come in contact with a pistol, and he clutched it eagerly, feeling the nipple to see if there was a cap on it.

"At last! at last!" he said. "I can now do what the generous Englishman refused. Barboni shall die by his own hand."

The little coxswain understood the situation in a moment.

Barboni was going to commit suicide.

He was just in time.

Had he been a few minutes later, he would have found nothing but the gory corpse of the great brigand chief, and a smoking pistol by his side.

Raising himself on a level with the ledge, he crept along as noiselessly as a cat after a bird.

Barboni presented the pistol to his head.

The next moment Walter was upon him with a bound.

A vigorous blow sent the pistol flying to the further end of the cave before he could draw the trigger.

"No you don't," he said.

Barboni was baffled.

"Ha!" he cried; "who is this? May a curse light on you for this."

"I am the little coxswain, my tulip," was the reply; "and you've got to come with me to Naples; I've got a boat waiting, and we shall do it in style."

Barboni groaned.

"Never, never!" he said, furiously. "I will die first! Stand on one side; let me throw myself over the rocks."

Walter did not hesitate a moment.

He threw himself on the blind man and tried to hurl him to the earth.

A fearful struggle ensued.

Locked in one another's arms, they rocked to and fro like sailors in a storm.

At length Barboni's foot slipped and he fell heavily on the back of his head.

For a time he was stunned.

Rushing to the mouth of the cave, Walter beckoned to the boatmen.

"Come here," he said. "I have captured Barboni; done it all myself; there's no danger. Come at once; you shall be well rewarded."

The men talked together for a moment, and then they decided to go.

Reaching the cave, they helped to bind the brigand's arms, and with considerable exertion they carried him to the boat.

He was placed in the stern sheets.

Walter took the tiller, and the men rowed with a will to Naples.

Barboni was in a state of semi-consciousness, and neither moved nor uttered a sound.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE SPY'S FATE.

WHILE this important capture was being made by the little coxswain, an event of great interest was taking place on the other side of the city.

Jack, Harvey and Clear-the-Track Sam had wandered into the country, after gleaning all the news they could respecting the seizure of the brig and the massacre of the crew.

It was the general opinion that Hunston and Toro had got off in the vessel.

Two ships of war were dispatched in pursuit, though the chance of Hunston's capture was slight, as it was impossible to say what direction he had sailed in.

Jack and his friends had lately made it their custom to perambulate the country, and question the peasantry, in the hope of obtaining some information which would lead to the discovery of Barboni.

They were all anxious to get home.

The chase was becoming tiresome and monotonous now; everyone wished to end it.

That the old fox was hiding somewhere they had no doubt.

But in what locality no one could say.

The road they selected on this occasion was by the shore.

Suddenly Harvey said—

"I see someone coming towards us."

"Where?" asked Jack.

"Right ahead. He's dodging behind those rocks; look out. There he is again."

But though Jack looked, he could not see anyone.

"He's up to no good if he's dodging us, that's certain," he said.

"It looked to me like Bigamini," cried Harvey.

"Nonsense."

"It did. The fellow had just his cut and slinking walk."

"I should jolly well like to put my finger upon that gentleman," said Jack.

"So should I, the scoundrel. He's worse than Barboni by a long chalk," replied Harvey.

"Look, look!" said Clear-the-Track, "he's bolted. See him scudding along; I guess he's powerful frit."

"Unslung your rifle," said Jack.

Sam did so.

He was the only one who had brought a rifle with him.

"Shall I drop him?" he asked.

"If you can."

"Guess I'd drop a fly at three hundred yards—steady does it."

Sam dropped on one knee, and took a steady aim.

"Don't kill him," said Jack. "Put a ball in his leg."

"Right."

The little man, whoever he was, had smelt danger in the air, and was running along the sand at his best pace.

The American fired.

There was a sharp cry, and the runaway fell flat on his face, uttering such horrid yells, that it was easy to tell he was not killed.

The three friends ran up quickly.

It was as Harvey had conjectured.

The shrieking wretch, writhing with pain before them,

was Bigamini, the spy of the brigands, the traitor who had betrayed them on every occasion.

His hand was red with a dozen murders, and his worthless life forfeited over and over again to the law.

He had been crawling along the sea-shore, hoping to find a boat which would take him to some ship in the bay.

But Nemesis had dogged his heels closely.

He had fallen into the hands of his enemies when he least expected it.

"What did you want to go and shoot at me as if I was a sand-martin or a rabbit?" he moaned.

"Are you hurt?" asked Jack.

"Oh, Lord, ain't I? Wish you'd got it, begging your pardon, Mr. Harkaway, sir," rejoined the spy.

"Where?"

"The ball's lodged in my—my end, sir."

"He means his seat of honour," said Sam, with a laugh; "I aimed too high."

Bigamini was shot in the fleshy part of his back.

He rolled over and over, scratching at the sand and moaning dismally.

"What's to be done with him?" asked Jack.

"Oh, spare me, sir, spare me, Mr. Harkaway," cried Bigamini. "I'm only a wretched Bigamini, sir. Once I was a happy——"

"Silence!" thundered Jack.

"Let's try him by court-martial," said Clear-the-Track.

"Very good idea. I'll be judge," said Jack.

"I prosecute, and Harvey shall defend the prisoner," said Sam.

"Let him lie there," continued Jack. "I'll sit on this rock. Now, Clear-the-Track, you start."

Sam laughed and drew himself up, while Bigamini, who did not know whether this was a joke or not, stopped his howling.

His cunning grey eyes watched first one and then the other with the most intense interest.

"May it please this honourable court," began Sam, "I appear for the prosecution of the prisoner at the bar. His name is Bigamini, and he is the biggest villain unhung, I guess."

"Order," said Jack.

"By the court's pardon I will say that the prisoner was the spy of Barboni the brigand."

"He made me do it, gentlemen," whined Bigamini.

"Silence!" roared Jack.

"He betrayed us to Barboni and is responsible for Tom Carden's death."

"I never touched him sir," said Bigamini.

"Si—lence! Kick him, Dick, if he won't be quiet."

"Oh, my latter end!" groaned Bigamini; "if you had a bullet in your end, you'd squeak a bit, gentlemen."

"The prisoner at the bar," continued Sam, "murdered his wife. He also stole young Jack, and I think he deserves to die."

"Oh, spare me, gents, spare me," cried Bigamini.

"Do you plead guilty?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir, I'm guilty, but——"

"That's enough. I don't think I need call on the learned counsel for the defence after this admission."

"I bow to the decision of the court," said Harvey.

"It only remains for me to pass sentence," continued Jack.

There was a dead silence.

Bigamini trembled all over.

He saw that this was not a ghastly joke, but a terrible reality.

Soon it would end in an awful tragedy.

His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with terror, and he nearly fainted.

"The sentence of this honourable court is, that the prisoner Bigamini, spy, murderer, and abductor of children, who has just pleaded guilty to the several charges in the indictment, shall be condemned to death," said Jack.

He paused.

"Have you any thing to say, prisoner, why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?" he added.

Bigamini said nothing.

He only stared stupidly with his twinkling eyes.

"You shall be buried in the sand at low watermark, and be gradually drowned," continued Jack, "so that you may have time to repent, and may Heaven have mercy on your soul."

Harvey and Sam nodded their heads, to intimate that they thoroughly approved of the sentence.

The three friends looked about for some shells with which to dig a hole in the sand big enough to receive the culprit's body.

Bigamini turned his head and watched them like one in a dream.

Neither spoke a word.

They were all terribly in earnest.

The spy was bleeding slowly from his wound, and the red blood sank into the thirsty sand.

But neither pain nor fright could wring a sound from him now.

His mind was stunned.

At a moment when he hoped to get off with all his money, he was captured and condemned to death.

Jack seemed determined not to give him another chance.

All compassion was dead in the hearts of his captors.

So numerous had been his crimes, so atrocious his conduct, and so infamous his treachery, that he had placed himself without the pale of mercy.

He saw these stern, relentless men digging his grave.

Slowly but surely the dreadful work proceeded.

The hole grew deeper.

It was a little after the ebb, and the tide was flowing sluggishly in.

About an hour's time was required for the water to flow over the spot where his executioners were working.

How terrible must have been the wretched coward's thoughts at that moment.

How inexpressibly bitter.

"How deep?" asked Sam, who was down in the hole.

"What's his height?" asked Jack.

"Four foot nothing, I guess."

"Make it four feet."

"Right. Clear the track."

The work went on until the grave was dug.

By this time the tide was drawing perilously near.

One wave larger than the rest had rolled up to within a couple of yards of it.

Jack went up to the prisoner, and took him by the scruff of the neck as he would have done a rat.

Bigamini shivered.

The imminence of his danger made him find his tongue.

"Oh, sir—oh, Mr. Harkaway—kind, good gentleman—sir, have pity!" he gasped.

"What pity have you shown your victims?" replied Jack.

Bigamini was silent.

"Did you think of my friends or myself when you carried news of our movements to Barboni?"

"I was his spy, sir."

"Did you show the witch any mercy, or—but it is a waste of time to talk to you."

As he spoke he dropped the spy into the hole.

"Shovel away," he said.

Clear-the-Track and Harvey instantly began to pour in the sand, which they trod down with their feet.

At length Bigamini was firmly imbedded.

They proceeded very much as a man does who is planting a tree.

Only the spy's head remained above the surface.

"All done," said Harvey.

"Fall back," said Jack.

The three men retreated, and as they had placed the condemned man's face towards the sea, they could only see the back of his head.

His plaintive wails and exclamations, however, were distinctly audible, mingled with the mournful plashing of the waves.

"Oh, sir—kind sir, spare me," he cried. "I ain't so bad as you think. I might have killed your child, but I didn't."

An approaching wave higher than the other rolled up to his chin, and splashed into his open mouth.

The salt water made him choke.

"Lord help me, I can't breathe!" he continued. "What right have you to kill me? You're not legal judges."

"We are doing a righteous deed in ridding the earth of a contemptible monster," said Jack.

Another and another wave broke over him.

There was water all round him now, and it was quickly circling in foaming wavelets up to his chin.

The man's last moments were not spent in prayer.

He went mad, and cursed his enemies in language too terrible to be written.

Jack turned away in sickening horror.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

BIGAMINI DEPARTS ON A VOYAGE.

HARKAWAY and his friends turned to go.

Though by no means prudish, their ears were offended by the fearful torrent of imprecations Bigamini poured out.

"I reckon I never heard a chap cuss like that but once, and that was out west in California," observed Sam, as they turned away.

"It must have been awful if it was worse than this," said Harvey.

"Yes. I was making tracks for an hotel in a wildish bit of the country, when I came upon a train of waggons drawn by mules.

"There was a softish bit of road close at hand, and I stood up to see how they would get through it.

"The first waggon got through all right, so did the second but the third stuck hard and fast.

"The driver shouted, swore, and cracked his whip, but it was no go. Those behind—there were at least a dozen teams altogether—began to get impatient; as well they might, for it was getting nigh supper time, and they were still a mile from the hotel, where they calculated upon finding some of the tallest kind of feeding.

"At last a long slab of a coon from Vermont, who had charge of the hindmost team, came up.

"He was a very mild-looking, fair-complexioned fellow, and you'd have thought molasses candy couldn't be sweeter as he gently said to the driver of the stranded team—

"My good friend, can I help you?"

"The other driver guessed he might if he could, so the Vermont man took hold of the halter of the near side leading mule, and said, just as gently as before—

"'Kim up here, mules.'

"And there was something in his manner very persuasive, for every mule strained at the traces except one obstinate beast that resolutely arched its spine and hung back.

"'Kim up, mule,' repeated the Vermont man, 'kim up, you ugly old ——'

"Well, I can't repeat all he said, but for ten minutes that Vermont man poured out a perfect flood of the wildest blasphemy, till I almost feared the earth would open and swallow us up.

"But the obstinate beast gradually relaxed, till just as the Vermont man's oaths came to a climax, all the beasts gave a strain, and the waggon rolled on out of the mire.

"I saw the Vermont man afterwards in the bar of the hotel, where I went for a dust-cutter."

"What is a dust-cutter?" Jack asked.

"A nip of whisky straight, and a prime thing it is, to cut its way through the dust when your throat is filled. The Vermont man and the driver of the stranded team were liquoring up together, and the latter said, in a very admiring tone—

"Well, Ned, you can sw'ar, I bet."

"Me sw'ar?" replied he of Vermont, modestly; "why, stranger, I can't cuss as much as is worth a cent. But you oughter just hear old Zeke Jackson. He *can* exhort the impenitent animals. Why, stranger, I've knowed a mule renounce all the pomps and vanities of this world, and haul four tons through a foot of clay, when old Zeke was holding forth."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed our friends, but their laughter died away, as a most unearthly wail of agony from the lips of the unfortunate Bigamini reached their ears.

"It's rather a cold-blooded thing, after all, to leave him there to be drowned," said Harvey. "Don't you think so, Jack?"

Jack nodded and replied—

"I've just been thinking that we are rather exceeding the limits of just vengeance. Let us get him up before it is too late."

"Go ahead, then, boss!" exclaimed Clear-the-Track.

They rushed back at full speed.

Of a surety, the wretched spy was in a pitiful case, for each wave, as it touched the shore, rolled up over his head, and it was only at intervals that he could breathe and cough out the salt water that filled his nostrils and mouth.

The three friends dashed into the water and commenced removing the sand, Harkaway using a flat piece of wood—a broken oar-blade that had just been washed up.

But it was slow work, for every moment the water was

getting deeper, and each wave, in its advance, washed some sand back into the hole.

"Clear the track!" exclaimed the Yankee, shouting his war cry. "Here, fix this rope round the skunk's body just under his arms; then a good strong pull, and out he comes."

In an instant the suggestion was acted upon, and with all the force of their muscular arms, the three friends pulled away at the body of the spy.

But the wet sand held him most tenaciously, and it was only just possible for them to extricate him.

However, they did at length—when his legs were almost dislocated—manage to drag him from his perilous position.

"Blame the confounded skunk!" ejaculated Clear-the-Track. "I fancy he's drowned after all."

"No," said Harvey, "see, he moves."

"He's bound to die a drier death," said Jack.

"Of which this rope we've hauled him out with is an emblem," was the remark of Clear-the-Track Sam.

One or two slight movements of the face and limbs convinced Jack Harkaway and his friends that the wretched spy was still alive.

So they poured a little drop of whisky down his throat, a proceeding which soon effected a complete cure.

"Oh, once I was a happy Smiffins, but now I am a very miserable, half-drowned Bigamini," muttered the poor wretch.

"What are we going to do with him now?" asked Harvey.

"I hardly know," replied Jack. "It won't do to leave him about this neighbourhood. If we do, he is certain to take to murder and robbery again."

"Take him into Naples," suggested Clear-the-Track.

"No good; yet I don't know that it would not be the best plan."

Now Bigamini had been listening to his tormentors, being very anxious indeed to know what they intended doing with him.

He felt convinced by this time that his life was to be spared though, far from feeling grateful, he resolved in his own mind never to miss an opportunity of doing an injury to the three friends.

But going back to Naples, where, perhaps, some ugly disclosures might be made respecting past transactions, did not suit him at all.

He therefore opened his eyes and began moaning.

"Oh, noble gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, have pity on one who once was a happy——"

"Shut up! I don't want that kind of gammon," Jack said, very sharply.

"If you are not quiet, we'll bury you again, head downwards," said Clear-the-Track.

"Oh, gentlemen, listen to the prayer of a poor, miserable Bigamini. Don't take me to Naples. Do what you like with me except that. Send me to sea in an open boat, without oars, sail, or provisions, if you like, but don't take me to Naples."

Jack gave him a gentle touch with his toe, not far from the spot where the American's bullet had penetrated, and bade him rise, an order which the wretched spy was constrained to obey.

Bigamini was drenched to the skin with salt water, and the damp sand clung to his clothing.

Ever and anon, he rubbed the wounded part, which the salt water caused to smart terribly, though it had stopped the bleeding.

"Now walk on in front of us," said Jack.

"And remember," added Clear-the-Track Sam, "if you attempt to escape, I swear by the ghost of General Jackson, I'll let daylight through the other end of you."

By way of convincing Bigamini that he was in earnest, the young American reloaded his rifle.

They kept along the beach, going towards Naples.

Had it not been for Clear-the-Track's threat, Bigamini would have bolted, but he had a wholesome fear of the rifle, and knew that an attempt to escape would bring swift punishment.

When they had gone something like a couple of miles, they came in sight of a little fishing village, where some eight or ten boats were drawn up on the beach.

Telling Harvey and Sam to guard their prisoner carefully, Jack Harkaway strode forward and entered into a bargain with the fishermen.

One boat he purchased outright, paying for it in gold, with a liberality that fairly astonished the vendor.

Another smaller craft he hired.

"Shall I assist you to row, signor?" asked the man.

"No," replied the former "stroke" of the Oxford eight;

"launch the boats, fasten the bow of the small one to the stern of the larger, and then I shall need no assistance."

The man did as desired, smiling at the difficulties he expected the English signor would encounter when he got into the boat.

But when Jack took up the oars and commenced rowing, his smile changed to a prolonged stare of astonishment.

"Per Baccho! These English signori are devils," he exclaimed.

Jack soon ran his two boats aground just where Sam and Harvey were waiting with their prisoner.

"In with you," exclaimed our hero. "You, Bigamini, in the small boat, Harvey and Sam with me."

Bigamini hesitated, but Clear-the-Track's rifle soon compelled obedience.

"What are you a-going to do with me, Mr. Harkaway?" he asked.

"You said you would rather be sent to sea in an open boat without oars or sail, so you shall have that treat. Come, Dick, take an oar, and we'll give this beggar a ride free gratis for nothing, as poor Sir Sidney Dawson's scout used to say."

"For Heaven's sake," he began, but the American, who sat in the stern of the larger boat, jerked that Bigamini occupied up and down in such a manner that the spy was compelled to devote all his attention to the preservation of his balance, and therefore held his tongue.

Jack and Harvey pulled away as though they had been pulling for a wager.

Objects on shore grew smaller and smaller as they receded from it.

Presently a breeze came off the land, then Jack dropped his oar and hoisted a small mast and sail, which formed part of the equipment of the boat.

Then merrily away before the wind, till the coast-line became hazy, and finally vanished entirely.

They were beyond sight of land.

Jack then lowered his sail, and resuming the oars, pulled round and round in a circle for some little time, to "puzzle the beggar," as he said.

When Jack had finished, he untied the rope which had held Bigamini's boat to his own, and allowed the spy to drift away.

"Mr. Harkaway," shrieked the wretch, "this 'ere is

murder! Give us a chance for life : leave us one of them oars to guide the boat with."

Jack and his friends held a short consultation, the result of which was that Bigamini was permitted to keep both oars ; and Clear-the-Track, at the last moment, threw to him a leather-covered flask, half full of whisky.

Then they hoisted sail and bore away, leaving Bigamini afloat on the Mediterranean.

"We have been in a worse fix than this, eh, Dick?" said Jack, looking back at the spy, who was a very bad oarsman.

"We have," replied Harvey ; "and we had done nothing very bad to deserve such luck."

"I expect he's about a settled member," said Clear-the-Track. "If he isn't drowned, he's bound to starve."

"There are many chances in his favour. He is almost certain to be picked up by some passing vessel."

In an hour they had sighted land again.

Bigamini and his little boat could no longer be seen. Jack steered direct for Naples, guiding himself by a small compass attached to his watch chain.

It was late in the evening, and the wind was blowing half a gale, when they landed. A poor lookout for Bigamini, they all agreed, yet they felt happier at the thought that they had at all events given him just a chance of saving his own life. It would have been unlike Jack's manly character to have allowed him to drown in that hole in the sands.

But what of Bigamini himself?

He knew little of rowing, and the current was running fast, so that in spite of his endeavours to follow our hero, he was unable to do so. Presently he was all alone.

Then he began to curse, but that did no good, so he applied to the whisky flask ; and under the influence of a draught, hope once more began to whisper in his ear. A ship might pass and pick him up.

But when the night was darkest, Bigamini's guilty conscience began to people the surrounding space with the spirits of his many victims. There was the old witch, his own wife, and many others whose days had been shortened by his agency ; and they seemed to howl in his ear that the time of vengeance was at hand.

The fearful visions he conjured up would not be laid by

repeated applications to the whisky flask, so the wretched little tailor lay down in the bottom of the boat, and cursed his ill-fate till daylight chased away the phantoms with which darkness had surrounded him.

And so the next night was passed by him, as also the third and the fourth. Bigamini had long since given up rowing, so that the fourth day found him drifting with the wind and current.

Certainly the fates had not treated him kindly, but then he deserved no kindness, for his hand had been against every man.

Five days and nights did he toss about in his boat, in a state almost verging on madness, sometimes blaspheming, at others whistling and singing.

And the idea of death, which at first had been very terrible, now seemed more familiar—nay, he even went so far as to contemplate it as a means of putting an end to the miseries he endured.

“Hang it, who is afraid?” he exclaimed. “Every man must die. A man can die but once, and when it is over there is an end.”

Bigamini tried to look extremely brave and resolute as he uttered these words, but when he remembered that there was no one at hand to be surprised at his bravery, he relaxed a little.

“I wonder if that *would* be the end. I don’t know much about it, but when I was a happy Smiffins I used to hear about another state, about rewards and punishments. Now, if that’s true, the old one below will have me, that’s certain.”

He paused a moment, but suddenly mustering up resolution, shrieked—

“Curse me! I’ll think about it no longer. I am not afraid of death, so here goes.”

With which words Bigamini struggled to his feet, and after one last despairing look around, threw himself head foremost into the blue sea.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE EXECUTION OF THE BRIGAND CHIEF.

WHEN the three friends reached the Strada di Toledo, they were surprised to see Monday performing extraordinary antics on the doorstep.

"Hullo!" said Sam, "look at the Kinki's head cutting up Jim Crow capers. Look at him. He's gone clean off his cocoanut."

"What's the row, Monday?" asked Jack.

"Um caught the brigand, sare," replied Monday.

"Who has?"

"Mast' Walter. Him just come back with um."

"Are you really in earnest?" said Jack, whose eyes burned lustroously.

"Me see um, sare, lodged in um gaol. All Naples got um flags out. The general him been here."

"This is great news," said Jack.

"Immense," remarked Harvey.

"Guess the little coxswain's a big chap," observed Clear-the-Track.

"Our task is nearly ended," said Jack, who ran up stairs to his wife.

Emily no sooner saw him than she threw herself into his arms, sobbing with joy.

"Have you heard the news, dearest?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!"

"It is all over now," continued Jack.

"Thank God, Jack, thank God!" said Emily.

Placing her on a sofa, he entered the next room, where he found Mr. Mole and Walter Campbell engaged in a hot discussion.

"I tell you straight," said Walter, "that I captured the brigand."

"And I tell you, sir," replied Mr. Mole, "that I found him first."

"Why didn't you collar him, then?"

"Because I had too much generosity to hand a poor, broken-down blind man over to the police."

"And I hadn't, you see. That is just the difference."

"It's my find," said Mole, doggedly.

"And it's my capture," replied Walter, with equal doggedness.

"My dear fellows," said Jack, "I congratulate you both. Why grumble over the matter? You have got the scoundrel, and that ought to be enough for you."

"But it isn't," said Walter. "Mole says he did it all, and he didn't."

"I found him," replied Mr. Mole, "and I let him alone, out of pity."

"More fool you," said Walter.

"Mr. Campbell," replied Mr. Mole, "I will not put up with such language from you or anyone."

"Then do the other thing."

"What's that, may I ask?"

"Lump it."

"Just what I might expect from a Cambridge man," said Mole, with a sneer.

"Don't you run Cambridge down."

"Look here," said Jack, "I won't have it! this is not the time for a row. Stash it, young one. I have something to tell you."

"He's so jolly aggravating, the old humbug," said Walter.

"You have captured the brigand——"

"No, I did it," said Mole.

"Well, you did it between you, sir. Will that do? And if you've done one big thing, we've done another."

"What's that?"

"We have been lucky enough to settle Bigamini."

"The bigger thief of the two," said Walter.

"The last snake in the nest," said Mr. Mole.

"We'll have a champagne cup, as well iced as Monday can do it," said Jack, "and sink all our differences in the flowing bowl."

"Hurrah!" cried Walter. "I'm sorry, though, there are no more brigands to kill."

"We will drown our differences, Harkaway, in the flowing bowl," cried Mr. Mole.

"That's right," replied Jack.

"This is a great day, a very great day, and I shall always observe it as such," cried Mole.

"We've licked after all, and if it wasn't for Carden's loss——" said Walter.

"Hush!" whispered Jack, "we mustn't conjure up ghosts. I regret poor Tom as much as anyone. But I mean to be jolly to-night all the same."

"Shall we give a cheer?" asked Walter.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"A regular rouser?"

"Yes."

"One that will be heard in the street?"

"Yes. Here come Dick and Sam; let them have it. We'll illuminate the house to-night."

"Take the tip from me, then. Join us, you fellows," said the little coxswain, who was much excited. "Ready?"

There was a general response in the affirmative.

"Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"For we are jolly good fellows—

For we are jolly good fellows—

For we are jolly good fellows—

And so say all of us."

"Hip, hip, hip! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"It's a way we have in the army,

It's a way we have in the navy,

It's a way we have at the 'varsity,

To drink a fellow's health."

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

The lazy Neapolitans who were passing by stopped in the street to listen, wondering what the noise meant.

The evening passed very pleasantly.

General Cialdini would have had Barboni tried by a court martial, but as he was not captured by the military, it was decided that he must appear before the ordinary criminal court.

The indictment against him was a very long one.

Barboni did not employ counsel.

He refused all offers of assistance.

At length the day of the trial came on, and the court was crowded.

The counsel for the crown had a very large brief, and seemed anxious to make a long speech.

Led in by the gaolers, Barboni took his place in the dock.

His steps were faltering, but when he knew where he had to stand, he drew himself up, and remained perfectly erect.

The indictment was read out.

Then the usher of the court ordered silence, and the great brigand was asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

"My lord president of this court," said Barboni, "I have fallen upon evil times, and knowing that my fate is already decided, I plead guilty to the charges brought against me."

The judge proceeded to pass sentence upon him.

This was that he should be hanged by the neck in the public plaza until he was dead.

The gaolers then led him away.

One week was allowed to elapse between the sentence and the execution.

The day before the one appointed for the execution, Barboni sent for Harkaway.

Jack went to the prison.

He was conducted into the condemned cell, where he found Barboni awaiting him.

To Jack's astonishment he advanced towards him, and held out his hand.

Jack drew back.

"I thought you were blind," he said.

"I was; but I have engaged the best surgical skill since I have been here, and my sight is partially restored to me," replied Barboni.

"Why have you sent for me?"

"Because I wish you to complete the work you have begun."

"In what way?"

"It is my intention to do justice to Lady Darrel and her son. Here is my written confession. Take it, and you will find that they will have little difficulty in regaining their own."

Jack took the document.

"I am glad that you have made reparation," he said.

"Why have I done it?" said Barboni; "why, because I loved the woman. You do not suppose, Mr. Harkaway, that the fear of death affects me."

He laughed scornfully.

"I have faced it too often to think that it has any terrors. No, no, I have a tinge of English blood in my veins, and the English are not generally afraid of death."

"Have you English blood in you?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"My father was an Englishman," replied Barboni, proudly.

"Have you any thing else to say to me?" queried Jack.

"Won't you shake hands with the brigand, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Thank you for the honour, but——"

"You'd rather not, eh?" said Barboni, with a smile, seeing he hesitated.

"Exactly."

"Yet you did not mind being friendly with the Prince di Villanova, and I and the prince are one and the same person."

"I was not to know that," said Jack.

"Well, I am sorry I made the offer. If you have your pride, I have mine," said Barboni.

Jack made no reply.

"You seem to forget that I was a generous enemy," continued Barboni.

"In what way?"

"I spared the life of your friend, Mr. Carden, when I had him in my power."

"Well?"

"And when you were my prisoner I did not order you to be stabbed or shot."

"That's true," said Jack; "but there is no knowing what you might have done if my faithful Monday had not rescued me."

"Go, Mr. Harkaway," said Barboni. "I have found you a brave enemy, and the luck is on your side now."

"You only meet with the fate you might have expected," said Jack, "and I tell you that I have no sympathy for you."

"I do not want it."

The brigand waved his hand loftily, and Jack retired with his confession in his pocket.

It was singular that the sight of this remarkable criminal should have been restored by surgical skill on the eve of his execution.

It would only enable him to see the surging crowd.

To behold the ghastly scaffold, and this hideous gibbet from which he was to swing from this world into eternity.

When the morning of the fatal day came, the friends prepared to go and witness the execution.

All Naples was *en fête*.

An execution was always a holiday with the Neapolitans.

And the death of such a distinguished man as Barboni had

made himself was certainly an opportunity for sightseeing such as the most idle and listless of the lazaroni even could not resist.

Jack and his friend took a window overlooking the square where the scaffold was erected.

They were rather grave than otherwise, for death is a sombre thing to contemplate when it comes with all the funeral trappings of the criminal law.

At ten o'clock the plaza was densely thronged.

A vast number of citizens had taken up favourable positions overnight.

Troops were posted in every position of vantage.

It was determined this time by the authorities to guard against a surprise.

No one, however daring, could hope to rescue Barboni.

At a quarter-past ten he came into the square.

A priest walked by his side, and holding up a cross, he exhorted him to listen to the ministrations of religion.

But the brigand shook his head.

He turned a deaf ear to him.

As he lived, he died—an infidel.

He mounted the scaffold with a firm step, and did not shrink when the rope was placed round his neck.

Turning to the populace, he attempted to make a speech.

“Good people,” he said, “I am the victim of English hate and persecution, but I die hurling defiance against heaven and earth.”

A thrill of horror ran through the spectators.

The executioner obeyed a sign from the priest.

He dropped the bolt.

Barboni fell into the gulf, just as the impious words left his lips.

He hung suspended before the gaping crowd.

His limbs twitched convulsively for more than a minute.

Then he ceased to exist.

Such was the end of Barboni the brigand chief, who was publicly hanged, as a punishment for his misdeeds, in the sight of the major part of the population of Naples.

Jack only wished to satisfy himself that the miscreant was dead.

It had occurred to him that Hunston and Toro might try to effect a rescue, though he did not think such a thing at all likely.

Quitting the sickening spectacle, they all returned home.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A CASTAWAY.

OUR readers perhaps imagine that we have entirely finished the career of Bigamini with his desperate attempt at suicide as recorded in previous a chapter.

Never was a greater mistake.

Within two minutes after his plunge, Bigamini was in his boat again, and that too, without the aid of any special intervention of Providence.

It came to pass in this manner.

While descending through the water, Bigamini not only saw but actually touched a large fish of the kind known to the Mediterranean fishers as the tunny.

The fish was horribly scared, and swam away, while Bigamini, being under the impression that it was a shark, struck vigorously upwards, regained the surface of the water, and scrambled towards his boat, which was only a couple of yards off.

"Not for me!" he exclaimed, as he climbed over the gunwale. "I don't fancy that chap's jaws a-smashing and crashing through my bones! If it was only peaceful drowning, I wouldn't mind; but fond as I am of fishing, I don't care to be bait."

So he laid himself down to dry in the sun in a condition not to be envied by any human being, shivering with cold, hungry and thirsty, but with all his suicidal notions taken completely out of him.

But he still raved as much as ever.

At length, at about midnight, when it was extremely dark, and when cold and hunger had almost overcome him, he beheld a light at a distance.

"It is a star," was Bigamini's first thought, but a few seconds' reflection convinced him the atmosphere was too thick to allow any starlight to penetrate.

It must be a ship's light.

He looked, he shouted with all the force of his lungs, but still the light did not move, or if it did, it approached by such imperceptible degrees that it gave him little or no hope.

At last it died away.

Bigamini then gave way to despair again.

But as day broke hope once more gained the ascendant, for, to his inexpressible delight, he beheld a sail at a very little distance.

Bigamini did every thing he could to attract attention, and soon had the satisfaction of perceiving that he had been noticed.

The sea was calm.

The course of the vessel brought her within five hundred yards of the castaway.

A boat was lowered, and in a very short time Bigamini was on the deck of the good ship "Cato," bound from the Black Sea to Brazil.

As soon as some refreshment had revived the wretched Bigamini a little, the captain of the "Cato," a stalwart Englishman, named Hughes, very naturally wished to know what had happened that he chanced to be floating about alone.

Now Bigamini, in his intense joy at being once more saved, had not thought of that.

Of course he had not the remotest intention of speaking the truth.

The only thing was to hatch up a yarn which should bear some semblance of probability without going too much into detail. So, after a good deal of stammering and hesitating, he commenced—

"I shipped on board the 'Black Boy.'"

"What as?" demanded the captain and mate in a breath.

"As—as a sailor, sir."

"They must have been precious short of hands to ship such a lubber as you," said Captain Hughes, contemptuously. "Go on. Where did you ship?"

"At Palermo, in Sicily, sir. We were wrecked in that gale five days ago, and all hands, except myself, were drowned. I managed to save myself by getting into that boat."

"And why did not the others get into the boat?"

"I really don't know, sir. I was very much confused, and don't exactly remember what happened, but I suppose they forgot it."

Captain Hughes stared, but the mate, who had been looking over the side, exclaimed—

"Why, sir, that boat never belonged to the 'Black Boy.' It's one of the Italian fisher boats."

"It strikes me that this fellow is about the biggest liar that ever spoke the English language, if he is not something worse. Now, then, you had better tell me the truth."

"I have, sir, on my word of honour."

"Your word isn't worth a tinker's curse. Who was the captain of the 'Black Boy'?"

"Captain Campbell," answered Bigamini, prompted thereby by a passing recollection of the little coxswain.

"Another lie. Why, seven days ago, when we spoke the 'Black Boy,' there was no such man on board. Now I'll just give you one more chance to tell the truth, you dirty little vagabond; and if you don't, why, look out for squalls."

Bigamini remained silent.

"Speak, you scoundrel," said Captain Hughes, catching hold of one end of a coil of rope.

In spite of the threatening gesture of the captain, Bigamini saw that any attempt to explain would only involve fresh contradictions and exposure.

So he very rapidly and philosophically made up his mind that it would be better to endure a rope's ending for silence than to risk the chance of greater ills, which would very likely follow if he told the truth.

"Speak, you rascal—once!" exclaimed Captain Hughes.

Bigamini shook his head to intimate that he had no intention of doing so.

"Speak—twice!"

Captain Hughes flourished the rope's end over his head, but the little tailor resolutely held his tongue.

"For the third and last time—speak!" shouted the exasperated captain.

Not a word.

Down came the rope with full force, and Bigamini gave vent to a terrible yell.

Again, again and again the cruel cord descended on the shoulders of the howling little spy, but still he obstinately maintained silence as to the past, though loudly imploring for mercy in the present.

"You villain!" said Captain Hughes. "It seems you are obstinate; well, I'll take care and hand you over to the authorities when I reach the end of the voyage. I warrant they will find some method of making you speak. Go forward; and, Mr. Wild, see the rascal works for his rations."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the mate. "Now then, What's-your-name, forward you go."

"Where's that, please, sir?"

"A pretty sailor you are to ship on board the 'Black Boy!'" exclaimed the captain, in a towering rage. "Why, there's forward."

So saying, he laid hold of Bigamini's collar with one hand, and his trousers with the other, and threw him with great force toward the foremast.

Poor Bigamini fell on one of the ringbolts, and cut his ankle severely.

He lay howling on the deck for half an hour; the crew, who had heard his bald, disjointed tale, being of the same opinion as the captain—namely, that he was an impostor, if not something worse.

So they took little or no notice of him till a shift of the wind necessitated an alteration of the sails, when, cursing him for a useless, hulking lubber, one of them scull-dragged him into the forecastle.

For three days Bigamini remained in one corner of the forecastle, subsisting on the scraps of biscuit and beef that were occasionally thrown him, accompanied by a curse.

Be it understood that neither Captain Hughes nor his men were naturally cruel, and if Bigamini had been able to tell "a plain, unvarnished tale" when they first found him, he would have fared much better.

But the sailors knew him to be a liar, and his own tale had caused him to be suspected of scuttling the vessel he said he had embarked in.

"That fellow will bring bad luck to the 'Cato,'" said a bushy-whiskered tar to his messmate.

So great was the dislike to Bigamini that it required all Captain Hughes's authority to keep the crew from turning him into his boat again and setting him adrift, a project which found great favour among the tars, and was only prevented by a promise that the obnoxious one should be handed over to the legal authorities on reaching Brazil.

For the three days Bigamini remained in the forecastle, he was only able to crawl about on his hands and knees, the cut on his ankle being very painful, and so offensive from neglect and filth that the sailors strongly objected to his remaining.

The cook—more by way of a joke than any thing else,

advised Bigamini to wash it with some strong brine from the bottom of one of the beef casks.

He consented to do so.

"Oh, crikey, oh!" he shouted, as the strong salt found its way into the festering wound; and to the intense delight of the sailors, he hopped about like a bear on hot bricks.

After a little time, however, one of them, who happened to be tender-hearted in comparison with the others, gave the poor wretch a bit of tallow and some rag to dress the wound with.

And in a couple of days Bigamini was so far cured as to be able to hobble about the deck; but in himself he bitterly swore vengeance against his persecutors.

Nothing could possibly make a sailor of the brigand's spy, so Bigamini was handed over to the cook and steward to be a kind of cabin-boy (full grown) and general drudge, to the great delight of the stripling who had formerly performed those duties, but who now went forward to do the work of an ordinary seaman.

The "Cato" did not as a rule carry passengers, but at the time Bigamini was picked up, there were five on board, two ladies and three gentlemen.

Of four of the passengers nothing particular need be said, but the fifth, a Mr. Corrie, was noted for his enthusiastic pursuit of all kinds of specimens for his cabinet of natural history.

All was fish that came to his net, and the most insignificant of marine animals was pretty sure to be acceptable to him.

They had been five weeks at sea without any more important event than the finding of Bigamini, and were now in calm tropical seas, when Mr. Corrie, for the first time in his life, saw a flock of Mother Carey's chickens, and immediately wished the captain to shoot one.

Captain Hughes, without being superstitious himself, knew the crew would object, so he refused, and Mr. Corrie grumbled.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Bigamini, touching his hat.

"Why, I want one of those birds, and Captain Hughes will not shoot it."

"Never mind, sir; if you can get hold of a gun, I'll drop the birds. Don't say any thing, sir, but bring up a gun next time you come on deck."

Mr. Corrie agreed to do so, and the consequence was that,

an hour afterwards, Captain Hughes was startled by the report of a gun, and rushing on deck, followed by the mate and some of the crew, at once saw what had happened.

Captain Hughes himself was superior to superstitious fears, but he was angry to think that a thing he strongly objected to had been done.

With one blow of his fist he stretched Bigamini on the deck, and then retired below, muttering anything but good wishes about naturalists and such-like scientific enthusiasts.

"That's very strange," said Mr. Corrie, looking down on the prostrate Bigamini.

Then turning to the mate, he added—

"Will you have the kindness, sir, to let down the boat to pick up the birds?"

"On one condition," replied the mate.

"What condition is that, sir?"

"That you go off in the boat and never more set foot on this ship."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the naturalist, "all this fuss about a few trumpety birds."

"Those birds, sir, have a good deal to do with sailors. This is a very serious business, Mr. Corrie, and I can assure you we have not seen the last of it."

The mate then went forward to converse with the crew, and Mr. Corrie thought it best to go below.

As for Bigamini, he gathered himself up and slunk into the saloon, muttering deep vengeance.

"I've been struck and hit and served out with brine, and I'm blest if I don't make some of them suffer."

He coiled himself up in a corner, and began to brood over his plans.

"They're all against me," he muttered, rubbing his eye, which began to show the discolouring effects of the captain's fist; "but I'm blest if they don't get it hot before long."

All that day he sulked about, pondering how he could achieve his proposed vengeance.

But no opportunity seemed to present itself.

Next morning he heard—soon after breakfast—a slight commotion among the sailors on deck.

Being always inquisitive, Bigamini rushed up to see what was the matter.

He found the sailors congregated about the after part of

the deck, watching the motions of some monsters of the deep, who were leaping about in pursuit of a number of flying fish.

"Dolphins," said one of them, condescending to explain to the lubber, as they all styled Bigamini.

"Are they good to eat?" he asked.

"I believe you."

And in proof of that, he pointed to the preparations the men were making to capture one or more of the fish.

But at that moment, the steward shouted for the ex-spy, who was obliged to go forward and prepare the coffee for the men's breakfast.

That done, Bigamini had to work hard to get things ready for the passengers, so he was unable to see the sport of catching the dolphin, though, as he soon heard, he would have to cook it for dinner.

"Now then, down below with you, and sort out those stores," said the steward, quickening the movements of his drudge with his foot.

"All right," growled Bigamini, as he slouched away.

"I wish the stores would poison 'em," he said, as he commenced his task.

It was a dirty, disagreeable job, in a close, confined atmosphere, and did not suit Bigamini very much.

However, he had to do it, so in no very agreeable frame of mind he set to work.

"What's this?" he exclaimed to himself, when he presently came across a packet weighing two or three pounds.

He stripped off the outer covering, and a fiendish smile played upon his features as he read two words printed on a label upon the inner paper.

"This will do," he grinned; and he soon finished his task.

Reporting this to the steward, Bigamini was ordered, as he expected, to go and assist the cook in preparing dinner for passengers and crew.

The cook being drunk—the dolphin-catching had excited him early in the morning—Bigamini was obliged to do nearly all the cooking himself.

Strange to say, he did not grumble, as was his usual custom when burdened with about half as much labour as fell to every other man on board the ship.

He whistled and laughed to such an extent that many of the men relented, and felt sorry they had ever struck and abused the spy.

Dinner time came.

The weather was warm, and the sea so calm that the ship made scarcely any way.

The jolly sailors had little to do.

Laughing and skylarking occupied the greater part of the morning.

But at noon they all sat down to a substantial dinner.

The dolphin had not been cooked, for Bigamini pleaded ignorance of the manner in which fish should be dressed.

But there was a very substantial "plum duff," of which all partook.

All—captain, crew and passengers.

Except Bigamini, who slyly threw his portion overboard.

Dinner being over, the captain called for one of the crew who was a tolerably proficient fiddler, and proposed a dance.

But ere this could be done the mate came in with a very scared look upon him.

"What is the matter?" demanded Captain Hughes.

"The helmsman has dropped down dead, sir, and three other men, including Jones, the fiddler, are as ill as they can be."

On hearing this, the captain turned as pale as his mate, and rushed on deck.

The passengers hardly knew what to make of this.

Our friend, the enthusiastic naturalist, attempted to joke about it, and followed the captain, who, however, was in no humour for joking.

Neither captain nor naturalist returned any more to the cabin, for in a few minutes both were seized with the same illness that had already so rapidly removed no less than four of the crew.

"We are poisoned!" exclaimed the mate.

"Poisoned!"

The terrible word flew through the ship.

"Where is the cook?" was the next question.

The cook was brought forward.

He was in a state of maudlin drunkenness, but otherwise exhibited no symptoms of any thing like illness.

"What have you done with us?" demanded the mate, in hollow tones.

"Done?—nothing," stammered the man.

"We are poisoned."

"Then it must have been that vagabond the captain picked up."

"Search for him," said the mate.

A search being instituted, Bigamini was discovered in the fore-castle, apparently in the last agonies of death.

"It couldn't have been that fellow; he wouldn't poison himself. It must be you, for you alone are unhurt by the fatal stuff. I feel it."

"It is a mistake," protested the cook; "why should I poison you?"

But the mate and his men, who were fast succumbing to the effects of the poison, were not capable of reasoning very coherently.

"Overboard with the murderer! He shall not triumph," said the officer.

Half a dozen willing hands seized the unfortunate cook and hurled him over the side—a meal for the sharks, who now sported about the vessel.

The prognostications of the sailors had been fulfilled, though we still take the liberty of doubting whether the death of the two birds had any thing to do with it.

* * * * *

Let us close this painful scene as quickly as we possibly can.

Two hours after that deathly dinner, all was silent on board the fated ship.

Silence, deep as the grave, till the villain, Bigamini, rose from the corner where he had been pretending to die, and gloated like a fiend over the work he had done, for he it was who had poisoned the whole ship's company with the packet of arsenic he had found among the stores.

He laughed like a fiend as he ransacked the vessel and transferred all the coin he could find to his own pocket.

But in the midst of his exultation a pain shot through him, and he had to cease from his work to sit down amongst the pale corpses which strewed the deck.

Half-an-hour afterward she was in a raging fever and delirious.

And he was the only living being on board that fated vessel, which drifted away on the ocean, with no hand to guide the helm.

Faugh! Let us leave the wretch to his fate.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

BREAKERS AHEAD—THE BRIGAND'S AVENGER.

THERE was one man in the gay rollicking crowd at the execution of Barboni, who was profoundly affected at the painful and ghastly scene.

All the rest of the spectators seemed to look upon it as a holiday.

To them it was a carnival.

They were not impressed at the tragedy which involved the shameful death of a fellow-creature.

The scaffold was a stage, and they were witnessing a performance.

Even the lazzaroni basked in the sun, and laughed lightly.

This old man, however, was a striking contrast to the others.

He was thin and wrinkled, his back was bent, his eyes had lost their lustre, and his hair and beard were grey.

Tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, his lips quivered, and he clenched his hands as if in agony.

By his side was a middle-aged man, who, as the spectators began to move away, noticed his grief.

Either he took compassion on him or was curious to know the cause of it.

The old man was poorly clad, and though, not exactly looking like a beggar, was evidently in bad circumstances.

Slipping a scudi into his hand, he said, "Take this alms; I am Adriano, the baker, and keep a shop at the left-hand corner of the Plaza."

"Many thanks," was the reply.

"If you want bread, come to me and I will give it to you."

"It is not bread I require."

"What, then?"

"Revenge!" hissed the old man.

"Ha! What for? Who are you?" inquired the baker.

"You may know. I am Guiseppe Barboni, brother of the famous brigand."

"He who has just been launched into eternity?"

"The same, signor."

At this declaration, the baker regarded him with supreme astonishment.

"That is why you weep?" he said.

"Would not you under the same circumstances?"

They neither of them noticed a man who stood close behind them.

He was dressed as an ordinary civilian; his eyes were like those of a hawk; his nose was a parrot's beak, and generally he was ugly, but apparently shrewd.

This personage was Arentino, a sergeant of the Neapolitan detective police.

He eagerly drank in every word that was uttered.

It was his business to be a spy, and it was agreeable to his crafty nature.

People said that Arentino knew every rogue in Naples by sight.

He certainly had a wonderful recollection for faces.

"My friend," continued the baker, who was kind-hearted, and without any prejudice, "I pity you."

"Again I thank you," replied Guiseppe Barboni.

"Were you one of your brother's band? If so, be careful."

"No—I never was associated with him; but you should hear all."

"If it is a secret——"

"Bah! my story is well known. Twenty years ago I was a clerk in a bank. I had an enemy. The man swore I stole money. It was a lie. I was arrested. They got up false evidence against me. A conviction followed."

"And you?"

"For twenty years I have been an inmate of a prison. It was only this morning that my sentence expired, and I was liberated."

"How came you here?" asked Adriano.

"I saw people thronging to the Plaza. They talked of an execution. I joined the crowd. To my horror I saw my brother ascend the scaffold. You ask me why I weep?"

"Those tears are sacred."

"Not so. I have a vulture gnawing at my heart. Do you know it's name?"

"How can I tell?"

"It is revenge. I have nothing to live for, except that. Yes, I will avenge my brother."

"On whom?"

"Upon those who hunted him to his doom," answered Guiseppe Barboni. "I keep my ears open ; the people near me have been talking."

"What did they say?"

"That Barboni, the brigand, was betrayed by an Englishman, named Harkaway, who was his enemy. Had it not been for Harkaway, he would have escaped to a foreign land."

"Yes, that is true. I have read it in the papers," replied Adriano simply.

"Why did he interfere in my poor brother's affairs? When I was in trouble, my brother was kind to me. He spent money, exerted himself, moved heaven and earth to get me acquitted. I can not forget him."

"This Harkaway has been hunting Barboni for months. Truly, he owes his death to him and his friends."

"They shall pay dearly for it," said Guiseppe, bitterly.

It was, indeed, a shock to the man.

He had only that morning been liberated from prison, after twenty long, weary years of incarceration.

It had been his ardent hope that his brother would hold out his hand to him.

He expected to find his house and purse open to him.

Barboni was Guiseppe's only friend.

For years he had been the rock on which he had built his aspirations, and now he was dead.

Innocently, unknowingly, he had wandered into the Plaza, to see him hanged.

The harrowing spectacle had completely broken his heart.

He had lost all sympathy with the world, and become a tiger raging for blood.

It set his brain on fire, and maddened him.

No longer was he a rational human being, in touch with his fellow-man.

"Can you tell me more?" he asked. "Where does this Inglish Harkaway live?"

"I have seen his address in the papers. His—— Let me think."

The baker tapped his forehead.

"Ah! I have it," he continued, after a slight pause. "It is the Strada di Toledo."

"It shall be engraven on my mind. Revenge shall dog the footsteps of Harkaway."

"From my heart I pity you," said Adriano. "I am a

good Christian. What do I go to Mass for, and give to the poor? Come, I will show you what I am made of. You shall go home with me for a day or two."

"With you?"

Guiseppe regarded him with amazement.

He could hardly believe the evidence of his senses.

"Why not?" replied the baker.

"But I am a convict."

"You tell me you were innocent of the crime imputed to you?"

"As Holy Mary hears me, that is true."

"I believe you. Have you not been punished?"

Guiseppe drew his breath quickly.

A shudder convulsed his attenuated frame.

"Heaven," he exclaimed, "only knows—and I—the unutterable horror of those twenty years?"

"You shall have food and wine. I will take care of you, and perhaps you will get over this craze for vengeance."

"Never!"

"But it is bad to hate. The priests say so."

"You do well to call it a craze. I am mad; but you know I have seen my brother hanged after twenty years' slavery."

"All the more reason why you should be taken care of. Come with me, I say," persisted the good baker.

"I am not fit to be in your house."

"That is my affair."

"Well, I will go. Just a meal, and a glass of wine to strengthen me, for I totter; and then——"

He paused abruptly.

"Well, what then? I will not let you go out alone just yet, my friend."

"No one can keep me away from this Englishman. Revenge—revenge—for my brother Barboni's death!"

"Will you come?"

"Yes, for a space, but it is not for you to turn aside the tide of vengeance."

Saying this, Guiseppe Barboni suffered himself to be led away by the baker, Adriano.

They crossed the now nearly deserted Plaza in the direction of the bread shop.

The body of the brigand had not yet been cut down.

It swung on the gallows, in the breeze coming up from the sea grim and ghastly.

Arentino, the detective, smiled.

Watching the two until they disappeared in the bakery, he turned on his heel and also walked away.

There was a deep meaning in his face.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

EMILY IS TAKEN ILL—MOLE AND THE PERFORMING BEAR—
JACK HARKAWAY RECEIVES A TIMELY WARNING.

WHEN Jack Harkaway returned from the execution, he flattered himself that all his troubles were over.

In this belief he was sadly mistaken.

Certainly, Hunston had escaped, with his usual skill, and there was no telling where he might turn up next.

But for the present he was gone, and if he did meet him again, Jack was ready to fight him.

We repeat that he did not care for Hunston, yet there were other dangers to be encountered.

It was Jack's intention to return to England, after a few days' rest in Naples.

During his long stay in the city, he had not been able to spare time to see all its beauties and attractions.

It was his intention to hire a steam launch, and take Emily to the famous grotto of Capri.

He also contemplated an ascent of Mount Vesuvius, and a lunch at the edge of the crater, which was now silent.

A disappointment awaited him, however, directly he reached his home in the Strada di Toledo.

Monday, Harvey and Mole had witnessed the execution, and had come back before their leader.

They went into the garden, to talk over their affairs, and comment on the chequered career of the brigand chief.

As Jack walked into the house, he was met by his son, whose face wore an anxious expression.

"Well, my little man!" exclaimed his father, "what's the matter with you?"

"Mamma is not well," replied the boy.

"Where is your mother?"

"In the drawing-room, with Hilda."

Jack hastened to the apartment, slightly alarmed.

He had heard that a fever had broken out in Naples.

It was becoming epidemic, and some of the best families had already left for healthier parts.

This kind of fever was well known and dreaded in all Italian cities, including Rome and Florence.

Could it be possible that Mrs. Harkaway had fallen a victim to its malignant influence?

Jack found his wife lying on the sofa, her face was flushed;

Hilda was bathing her forehead with eau de Cologne and fanning her.

"You are not ill, surely," exclaimed Jack.

"Not exactly ill—hot and feverish and so tired, dear," Emily replied. "I feel as if it would be too much exertion to walk across the room."

"Have you been exciting yourself about the execution?"

"It has been on my mind. I was glad the wretch had met his deserts. He has been such a curse to us. The suspense and worry of these last few months have told on me."

"She has talked of nothing but Barboni's fate all the morning," observed Hilda.

"Try and go to sleep," said Jack. "You want rest."

"I think I will go to bed. My head is dizzy," replied Emily.

"Shall I fetch a doctor?"

"Not yet. I may get better in a few hours. If I am not better to-morrow, I will have medical advice."

"Perhaps it will be best to wait; let me carry you up stairs."

"I can walk, I think, Jack dear."

She got up, and endeavoured to cross the room, but before she had taken half-a-dozen steps she stumbled, and would have fallen, had not her husband caught her in his arms.

He lifted her up, and carried her as if she had been a child.

"Stay with the boy, Hilda," he said. "I will look after my wife; there is nothing for me to do out of doors; when I want you I will send for you."

"If I can be of any assistance——" began Hilda.

"Not at present," Jack interrupted. "I fancy I shall be the best nurse, for a while."

"You know best. I shall not be far off."

"Keep young Master Jack quiet; we must not have too much noise. Emily will most likely be all right after a rest."

He conveyed his wife, who was pale as a lily, and as helpless as a baby, to her bedroom, and laid her on the bed.

"Stay by my side, Jack," said Emily, feebly. "I feel I want you with me—nobody else."

"I am going to stay, my own," he answered. "Put your little hand in mine—so. How hot it is! Would you like some ice?"

"Presently. I want to sleep now. Every thing seems black to me. Is it night?"

"No, my love. It is about midday."

"Don't go away. I want you."

Her eyes closed, her breathing became faint, and she fell asleep, Jack sitting in a chair by her side.

For two hours he remained patiently in the room.

Seeing that he could do her no good by staying any longer, he left the room, and sent up Hilda to take his place.

He wanted to speak to Harvey about this sudden attack of illness, and seek his advice.

On making inquiries, one of the servants informed him that Harvey had gone out, leaving word that he intended to sail in the bay.

He saw that Mr. Mole was seated in the garden under a shady tree, engaged in the pleasant pastime of eating grapes, and drinking the wine of the country, called Chiaschi.

Two empty flagons were on the grass; a third was on the table in front of him, flanked by a dish of fine ripe grapes.

Jack walked out to him.

"Ha! my boy," exclaimed the professor, "you are just in time to have some fruits. Sit down."

"Thank you," replied Jack. "I will keep you company, but I prefer to smoke."

"Selfish habit. Sir Walter Raleigh has much to answer for in bringing the nicotine weed from America to this country."

"Why so, sir? It is a solace to the nerves."

"It makes a man retire into himself, and love his own society. Lord Beaconsfield declared that it was the tomb of love. A cigar kills kisses, and speaking from experience, I say that a man who smokes becomes intoxicated twice as soon as one who does not. In fact, after a man passes forty, he can not smoke and drink, too."

Jack smiled at this characteristic speech.

"Much obliged for the little lecture," he said. "I take you as an authority on the subject; but at the same time, I shall not give up smoking in moderation."

"You seem to have a cloud upon your brow," observed the professor.

"I am worried about Emily; she has been taken ill suddenly."

"Indeed! I fancied at breakfast-time this morning she was not looking well."

"The marsh fever is about. I am anxious."

"Perhaps it will pass over. We have been through trials that tax a man's strength, as well as a woman's."

"Ah," sighed Jack, "you may well say that."

"I had hoped the troubles were all over," continued Mr. Mole, "and that we were about to return to England, wherein rural seclusion, you could hunt the fox, shoot game, and enjoy yourself generally as a country gentleman."

"And you, sir, could teach the young idea how to shoot."

"Certainly. I educated you, taught you all you know—which isn't much, I admit."

"Now, Mr. Mole——"

"It was not my fault. You can bring a horse to the water, but I'll be hanged, like Barboni was this morning, if you can make him drink."

"You shall be my son's tutor."

"Of course. I should like to see you send him away from me! It shall be my pride to make a man of him. Have some of this fruit."

"You have only enough for yourself."

"Bah!" said the professor, "there is more where these came from. This is the land of grapes."

"All the same, they don't grow in this garden."

"I have sent Monday out for a fresh supply. Ha! here the imp of darkness comes, with a basket on his arm. Good old Monday! he's a fine fellow, when you rub him the right way."

"When you don't——"

"He's a demon, Harkaway; but then we must make allowance for him. He's got black blood in his veins."

"Does that give him a double portion of original sin?"

"Treble, I should say. The other day I ruffled his feathers, and he cried, 'Got a razor in my boot, sah. Cut you deep, cut you quick!'"

"I daresay you offended him," replied Jack.

"Nothing much; I only threw an empty wine bottle at him."

"Enough to get his monkey up."

"There's a little too much of the monkey about him some times, and I have to take him down a peg or two," said Mole.

"You'd best not let him hear you say so."

"Pooh! who's afraid? I don't care a snap for niggers."

Jack saw that the wine was getting into Mr. Mole's head, and refrained from saying any more.

Putting the grapes on the crystal dish which stood on the table, Monday made a mock bow.

"There am the grapes, Mast' Mole," he said. "What you going to give me for fetching them?"

"You wouldn't like to get what you deserve."

"What um that, sare?"

"A smack on the side of the head, you black spot on humanity."

"That nice thing to say to um man."

"You've been gone half an hour, when ten minutes would have sufficed."

"I stop to see a performing bear."

"Oh! did you? That's another thing. I am very fond of well-trained animals. Where is he?"

"Outside um door."

"What does he do?" asked the professor.

"Stand on um hind legs, play a tambourine like a Salvation Army lassie in um hallelujah chorus, and——"

"Go on," interrupted Mole, "perhaps you will tell me that he sings the 'Sweet bye-and-bye,' or 'Shall we gather at the river?' or 'Darling I am growing old.'"

"You growing jolly old, and silly, too."

"Monday! How often have I cautioned you not to be rude?"

"Keep still, then. You is always on to me. Bash um head with a wine bottle other day."

"Serve you right. I'll do it again."

"Not much, you won't. Cut you deep with um razor, sare."

Monday stooped down, and pulled out a razor, which he had concealed in his boot.

The professor fell back in his chair.

He put up his hands deprecatingly.

"For heaven's sake, don't lark with things like that," he said.

"Shut um mouth, then," replied Monday.

"Oh, dear! What I have to put up with from this black man!"

"Black as good as white, so long as he behaves himself."

"That's right enough!" exclaimed Jack; "but, I say, stow that razor away."

"Tell Mast' Mole to let me alone, sare."

"He won't annoy you any more."

Monday returned the razor to its receptacle.

He was satisfied with what he had done.

The mere sight of it had completely cowed Mr. Mole.

"Come," said the latter, gaily, as he helped himself to some more wine; "let us be merry. What does Horace say?"

"Lots of things, sir," answered Jack.

"Name one, if your memory serves you."

"That an old man should not play the fool."

"Wrong! I know my Horace by heart, and that passage does not occur. He rather inclines to the contrary. Monday!"

"What um want now, sare? This child going to pitch on the grass, and have um sleep."

"Not yet."

"Who's going to stop me? Not you, or all the masters of houses at Oxford."

"Just be good enough to go outside and bring that performing bear and his master in here. Tell him he shall have half-a-dozen lire for his trouble. I can't afford more."

"All right, sare," replied Monday; "but better look out."

"What for, my man?"

"That am, um wrestling bear; him wrestle with any body, and put on the hug till you cry 'ouch!'"

Mr. Mole smiled disdainfully.

"Who cares for a paltry bear," he remarked. "I will amuse myself with the antics of the ungainly creature."

"He make a Egyptian mummy of you, sare."

"Not he!"

"Squeeze you flat as um pancake on Shrove Tuesday. Don't you forget it."

"Bosh! Bring on the bear."

"Very well, sare, me going."

"I suppose there is no music by the band?" asked Mole.

"You make the music when you begin to holler," laughed Monday, trotting off.

Jack raised no objection to the performing bear coming into the garden.

He rather wanted to be relieved from the care that was weighing him down.

The bear was under the control of his master, he supposed, and not at all dangerous.

In a few minutes Monday reappeared through the garden gate, accompanied by a Savoyard, who led a big brown bear by a rope which was attached to its neck.

"Ha!" cried the professor. "That reminds me of the event of the morning."

"In what way?" asked Jack.

"Hempen noose; rope round neck: Barboni. 'Twig?'"

"Right. I see the simile now. Very appropriate."

The Savoyard gave the bear a tambourine. It stood on its hind legs, and knocked it with its fore paws.

"Bravo! Very good!" said Mole.

"Been in England," exclaimed the owner, "all over the world."

"Performed before her most gracious majesty the Queen, I suppose?"

"Yessa. Windsor Castella. Great well-known beara. Been before all the crowned heads of Europa."

"Wonderful. What can he do?"

"Wrestle like a strong man; throw any body. You wanta have a try, signor?"

"Well, I don't mind," replied the professor; "fact is, I am not particularly fit. Athletics is not my strong suit, and to wrestle with a performing bear is rather below form for a classical tutor; but, in the language of the ring, 'I'm on.'"

"He not hurta you."

"Certainly not. I'm more likely to hurt him. Bah! What price your bear?"

Mr. Mole, for the moment, fancied he was a mighty man.

He was reckless from over-indulgence in wine, and, as Ibsen would say, "had vine leaves in his hair," which is a mild way of saying he was tipsy.

Jack was fearful that some harm would come to him.

"What are you about to do?" he asked.

"Try a fall with the bear," replied Mole.

"You have no chance with a creature like that."

"Don't talk such childish rot, my dear Harkaway; allow me to have my own opinion."

"You will not be warned."

"I rather think I have a mind of my own."

"It is a very obstinate one—somewhat mulish."

"Call me a mule if you like; I am going to try conclusions with that bear and throw him. I wrestled when I was young. He can have Cumberland style or Cornish, whichever he likes."

"Go ahead, then; if he hurts you it is not my fault," replied Jack.

"Certainly not."

Mr. Mole advanced to the bear, from whose neck the owner slipped the rope.

This was to allow the animal greater freedom.

The bear uttered a deep growl as Mole approached him. He stood on his hind legs, and put up his fore paws,

Fearlessly, and with an air of bravado, the professor threw his arms round the bear.

The compliment was returned, and the man of letters found himself so tightly compressed, that he could scarcely breathe.

In a moment the creature had hugged him, and, in spite of his struggles, he could not free himself.

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Mole. "Call him off!"

"Will the beast bite?" asked Jack.

"No feara," replied the Savoyard; "only hugga. Me traina not to bita."

"Call him off!" screamed Mole.

"What prica my beara, you aska?" said the owner. "You give ten lire?"

"Yes, twenty; confound the brute!"

"Letta go, Garibaldi"—that was the bear's name—"droppa the signor, quicka!"

The bear at once released Mr. Mole, and walked back to his master.

In a moment, the rope was readjusted round his neck.

All danger, if there was any, was over.

"Bless me," said Mr. Mole, "what an extraordinary thing!"

"What's that, sir?" asked Jack.

"I'm not subject to it; but I suffered from a sudden failure of muscular action. My arms gave way, just as rowing men's do sometimes."

"Indeed!"

"Fact, I assure you; the climate has something to do with it, I suppose. Had it not been for that, I would have made an example of the brute, and floored him."

"Cornish or Cumberland style, sir?"

"Oh, you are always ready to chaff," said Mole, with an air of utter disgust.

"Pay the man and let him go."

Reluctantly the professor handed the Savoyard the sum money he had promised him.

Monday showed the master and the bear out of the garden.

Presently the black came running back.

"Um strange man to see you, sare," he exclaimed.

"Bring him in here," replied Jack.

In another minute Monday returned with Arentino, the detective.

A card he handed Jack revealed his name and profession.

"Your business with me?" queried Jack.

"Is of a delicate nature, signor. The gentleman with you——"

"My old and trusted friend. You can speak before him."

"Good," replied Arentino. "It has accidentally come to my knowledge that you are threatened with a great danger."

"From what source?"

"I am but a poor detective. This is no matter of State. Any reward you like to give me will be thankfully received.

"Rest assured I will not be ungrateful if you render me a service. Speak freely."

"Barboni had a brother. He was released from twenty years' imprisonment to-day, and seeing his brother die, has vowed to be revenged on you, because you hunted him to the scaffold."

"Are you sure of your facts?"

"I heard Guiseppe Barboni swear it. Leave Naples at at once, signor."

"Unfortunately I cannot," answered Jack. "My wife has been taken ill suddenly."

"Your life is not safe. Guiseppe knows where you live. At any moment he may attack you. The man is old, poor, broken. Revenge for his brother's fate is all to him. If he can kill you, or your wife, or your friends—perhaps all—he would gladly die. What is life to such a being?"

"How did you ascertain this?" inquired Jack.

Arentino frankly related what he heard pass between Guiseppe Barboni and Adriano, the baker, in the Plaza that morning.

There was no reason to disbelieve his statement.

Jack made him a handsome present for his timely warning. The detective thanked him profusely for his kindness.

"Remember, signor," he added, "that Guiseppe Barboni is at present the guest of Adriano, the baker, in the Plaza."

"I will not forget," said Jack.

"He may come upon you at any moment. I can do no more. For the threat I cannot arrest him. You must look to yourself."

Bowing politely, Arentino took his departure.

Monday, who had been lying on the grass, overhearing the conversation, jumped up.

"Um got it, Mast' Jack," he cried.

"Got what, you silly, grinning ape?" asked Mole.

"Me not talk to you, sare. You go and talk to um bear. Yah, yah!"

"Stop that noise."

"He put the hug on you all right. That a fine bear: Mast' Jack, um speak to you."

"Proceed," said Jack.

"Um try to think where I hear that name Adriano. Now I recollect. It was the morning before Missy Emily took sick. She talked to the cook 'bout dinner, and find fault with the bread. Change the baker,' she say. The cook say, 'Very good baker, Adriano, in Plaza; buy bread from him in future. Now we deal with him from to-day. Get our bread there for to-morrow.'"

Mr. Mole smiled contemptuously.

"What of that?" he remarked. "Your addle-pate tells you that you have made a wonderful discovery, but I don't think so."

"Nor I," said Jack. "There is nothing in that."

"Me keep my eyes open," continued Monday. "Not sleep at night till we get away from this city."

"Find out something else, my sable friend," sneered Mole.

"You go and find out all 'bout bears."

"Just give bears a rest," growled the professor. "Hire a hall if you want to give a lecture on natural history."

"How um ribs feel?"

"Sore, my friend—very sore. I wish you had half my complaint," answered Mole, grimly.

"We must be on our guard," exclaimed Jack; "danger environs us again. I thought that the vile spawn of the

Barboni family was extinct with the brigand, and now a brother crops up."

"Never mind, sare; Monday be on the watch," said the black.

They walked into the house, as it was nearly dinner-time.

Hilda met them in the passage, and informed them that Emily had had a refreshing sleep, had taken some soup, and felt better, though she was unable to get up.

"Thank heaven for that!" ejaculated Harkaway.

Later in the day, he sent for the best doctor in the city, who stated that she was not attacked by the fever then so prevalent.

Her malady was nothing more than nervous prostration, brought on by the loss of her boy, and other exciting events.

He told Jack not to expose her to any fatigue for some days, and Harkaway postponed his departure for a week.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE BAKER'S ASSISTANT.

THOUGH the worthy Adriano, with his Socialistic proclivities, was foolishly good-natured, his wife Coresca was entirely the reverse.

She had a bad temper and a mean disposition, which was aggravated by the fact of their having no children, though they had been married some years, she becoming very selfish.

When Adriano brought Guiseppe Barboni home with him, installed him in the parlour, and gave him something to eat and drink, her wrath was roused.

She waited till he came into the shop to open her tirade.

"A pretty thing to do!" she exclaimed. "Why do you bring a beggar man in here to rob me?"

The baker did not dare relate the man's history, for it would have rendered her more disagreeable.

"He is honest enough," replied Adriano. "The fellow is poor, and as he told me he wanted employment, I thought you would find him useful as outdoor assistant. He will come cheap."

"That is not a bad idea," replied Coresca, who liked anything that was cheap. "Our man, Filipo, has been very saucy more than once; he is always under a week's notice, and shall go to-day. What do you call your lazzarone in there?"

"He answers to the name of Guiseppe. Do what you like with him. I will go below to the bakehouse, and set the sponge for to-morrow."

No sooner had he gone down the stairs than Coresca called to Guiseppe Barboni.

"You must take the bread out to-day," she said, "here is a basket of loaves, and here is the list of customers, with their addresses. You will soon get used to it. Be off."

Guiseppe comprehended that he was to be the baker's assistant, and did not object to working in this way, in return for the temporary relief he was receiving.

He lifted the basket on his arm, and held the paper of names in his hand.

Reaching the bottom of the street, he sat down to read the paper, and ascertain where he had to go.

For twenty years he had been shut up, and though born in Naples, he had forgotten the names and formation of the streets.

In front of him was the Strada di Toledo. He knew that from its width, and the splendour of the houses in it, and also by a grand chemist's shop which occupied one corner.

Looking down the list of Adriano's customers, the forlorn and weary Guiseppe, saw the name of Signor Harkaway, No. 15, the Strada di Toledo.

Then his eyes lighted up with the keen desire for revenge, which he had vowed, at seeing his brother's fate on that bright sunny morning, which had been so full of promise to him.

As Monday had remarked, Emily had changed her baker, transferring her custom to Adriano, and it fell to Guiseppe Barboni's lot to deliver the bread that day.

A diabolical idea entered the head of Guiseppe.

There was six loaves to be delivered at Harkaway's house, and he conceived the plan of poisoning each one, by which means he hoped that he would destroy the whole family.

"Not one, but all," he muttered. "It is a nest of vipers; they shall all die, however numerous they may be. Ha, ha! They have not yet done with the name of Barboni."

He did not delay carrying out his purpose, but walked with his basket across the road, and entered the shop of the chemist.

Stating that he came from Adriano, he asked for some arsenic with which to kill rats that infested the bakery.

The chemist gave him a quantity of the deadly poison without asking any questions.

He went away with an impassive face, though his heart was inwardly rejoicing,

Diving down some small back slums he reached the seashore and seated himself on the beach where he was secure from observation.

On his way he had purchased a long, narrow iron skewer, with which he made holes through six of the topmost loaves in the basket.

These perforations he filled with arsenic, putting in each loaf enough to kill a dozen men.

Having completed his preparations, he hastened back to the strada in which Jack lived, and delivered his deadly consignment to a servant, who put the bread as usual in the pantry.

Then he went the rest of his round, and returned to the shelter that Adriano had found him; but the spirit of unrest was upon him. He could not sit still; and was forced to go out again.

He had been so long confined, that he felt he could live under the blue vault of heaven.

"Where are you going?" asked the baker.

Guiseppe Barboni replied that he did not know. Spirit voices seemed to be calling him into the open air. Walls were not for him to live within. He might come back; when, he could not tell.

Some attraction seemed to draw him to Harkaway's house. He was afraid to loiter because he thought he would attract attention. So when no one was about, he glided into the garden through the side gate and hid himself among some evergreens.

Harkaway was at dinner with his friends. Young Jack, who had dined in the middle of the day, came into the garden with his pet wolf, which had been the property of the witch. The creature licked his hand.

"You are hungry," said young Jack. "I forgot to feed you this dinner time. Wait while I go and see what I can get."

He ran into the house and asked a servant for a piece of bread. She gave him a large slice.

"It's quite new," she exclaimed; "all yesterday's has been cut up for dinner. This is the supply for to-morrow."

"That will do," rejoined young Jack, going back to the wolf, to whom he threw the fresh, soft bread.

The animal devoured it greedily. Luckily, young Jack did not touch it. He contented himself with picking peaches off a tree which grew in the garden, and were deliciously ripe.

During this time, Guiseppe remained in the bushes, within a stone's throw of the boy.

"How is it I hear no cries?" he muttered. "The action of the poison is rapid; they should have eaten of the bread by this time. All is quiet. It is the Paradise of Milton, not the Inferno of Dante."

Neither Emily nor Jack allowed new bread to be put on the table, as they deemed it unwholesome. Thus a supply was taken in the day before, for use on the morrow.

This Guiseppe was unaware of. He expected to hear every moment the groans of the dying.

All at once, young Jack noticed his wolf stagger and roll on its side.

It seemed in the greatest pain, for peculiar cries came from its lips, on which a white froth had gathered.

In vain he tried to get it on its legs again.

Alarmed he was about to run into the house for his father, when Harkaway and his friends appeared on the lawn, closely followed by the ever-present and faithful Monday.

"What are you doing to your wolf, Master Jack?" asked Harvey. "He does not look comfortable."

"I gave him a bit of new bread just now, and after eating it he went like that," replied young Jack.

"His eyes are glazing; his limbs are stiffening; he is dying!" cried Mr. Mole.

"It is strange, that a bit of new bread should have such an effect," observed Jack.

Monday had been listening. He ran into the house, and was gone a few minutes. When he rejoined the garden-party, he held the key of the pantry in one hand, and the one loaf, that had been cut by the servant, in the other.

"What have you found out now?" asked the professor.

"Poisoned bread, sare," cried Monday. "Um willing to bet

on it; see the white powder in it; poison come from new baker. Barboni's brother lose no time."

Each looked blankly at the other, for Jack had, at dinner, related what passed between him and the detective Arentino.

"Young Jack has saved us all from a fearful death, by feeding his wolf!" exclaimed Mr. Mole.

The boy looked pitifully at the dying animal.

"Will my poor wolf die, father?" he asked.

"There can not be any doubt of it. Never mind; I will get you another pet—a dog, or a pony, whichever you like," answered Jack.

They gathered round the wolf, but were afraid to go close, as it snapped like a mad dog.

Monday walked about, wrapped in thought.

He approached the clump of bushes in which Guiseppe Barboni had secreted himself.

A slight noise arrested his attention.

Looking in that direction, he beheld a pair of glittering, cobra-coloured eyes.

In an instant the black drew his knife from his belt, and plunged into the evergreens.

Guiseppe Barboni was not armed. Cunning was more his forte than violence.

He saw Monday coming upon him like an avalanche, and strove to crawl away; but he was seized before he could go far, and dragged into the open.

With the knife held over him, and a fierce black man gripping him like a vice, Guiseppe thought his last hour had come.

"Who are you?" demanded Harkaway.

"Guiseppe Barboni," was the reply.

"What are you here for?"

"To see you all die of poison. It is in your bread. I put it in there because you caused my brother's death. Let me depart. I will go some where and die. My head is bad. I have not much sanity. Twenty years! It was awful. Then to-day, my brother— Holy Mary, have mercy."

"Take him to the police station," said Jack. "He has confessed."

"The unfortunate wretch is mad," remarked Harvey.

"Anybody can see that with half an eye," replied Mr. Mole.

Monday was about to drag him along, when, with a desperate

effort, the man snatched his knife from his hand and, with a rapid movement, knocked him down and ran away.

He escaped through the garden gate.

Everybody shivered with horror.

The madman was at large.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE MADMAN AT LARGE.

THE escape of Guiseppe Barboni, the mad brother of the infamous brigand, was a constant source of danger to Jack Harkaway and his friends.

They could not tell what new vile plot he would concoct for their destruction.

It was impossible for Jack to leave Naples until his wife was sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey.

That would be some days at the very earliest.

As soon as Jack had time to collect his thoughts after the scene in the garden, he sent Monday to the headquarters of the police to request the attendance of Arentino, the detective.

He felt that it was absolutely necessary that the madman should be captured.

If he was not put under restraint, he would infallibly do some serious mischief.

Monday was fortunate enough to find Arentino, and brought him back to the house with him.

Jack had been in close conversation with Mole and Harvey.

They both agreed with him, that the madman was more to be feared than the brigand.

Arentino declared that he was not at all surprised at what had happened.

He had expected some deed of violence without delay on the part of the miserable Guiseppe.

"I call him miserable," added the detective, "but at the same time we cannot afford to despise him."

"What will be his next move, think you?" asked Jack.

"It is impossible to tell. The man is a monomaniac, with

a homicidal mania. That is to say, he has only one idea, which is to kill you and your friends."

"Yes, you are right," replied Jack. "When the fellow poisoned the bread he went in for wholesale poisoning. It was not me alone he intended to poison, but all who are near and dear to me."

"That is precisely my opinion," continued Arentino. "Guiseppe must be hunted to his doom; he has committed a crime. We can arrest him if found, and shut him up, poor beggar, for the remainder of his wretched existence."

"If you can do that, my mind will be at ease."

"I will commence operations at once. Every part of the city of Naples shall be searched for the madman."

"You may reply upon me to reward you if you succeed."

"I must and will succeed," cried Arentino, confidently. "He shall be under lock and key before night, unless he has left the city. There is that contingency to be thought of."

"But in that case I am safe."

"Be not so sure of that, signor. He might return; there is method in his madness. These Barbonis come of a clever family. The father was an engineer officer, and fought under Napoleon the First."

"Do your best, my good Arentino," said Jack, "and report to me as early as possible."

"I will not fail to do so, signor. Adieu."

Touching his cap respectfully, the detective withdrew, having lightened the burden which had fallen on Harkaway's mind.

He had feared that Barboni's brother would try to injure Emily or young Jack.

If either were hurt it would be a terrible blow to him.

But surely Arentino was right.

It would be easy enough to catch the madman, although Naples was a big city, and there were plenty of places to hide in.

A heavy dew began to fall, and the men retired into the house.

Hilda informed them that Emily was not so well, and complained of pains in her head.

Jack spent the best part of the evening with his wife.

Afterwards smoking a cigar with Mr. Mole.

"I suppose," said the professor, "that there will not be any chance of moving Mrs. Harkaway for some days?"

"Not at all," answered Jack. "She is awfully nervous to-

night ; in fact, she is suffering from an attack of prostration, arising from a lowering of the nerve centres."

Mr. Mole listened attentively to this diagnosis.

He heaved a deep sigh.

"Did you hear me sigh?" he asked. "That came from the centre of my left lung. I am weak in the chest, also my nerves are run down."

"This is the first time I have heard of it, sir," remarked Jack.

"I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve," as the immortal bard observes.

"If you are ill you should have medical advice."

"Pish! What is the use of it?" cried Mole. "You have subjected me to hardship and exposure."

"How do you make that out?"

"Have I not followed you to various parts of the world, doing all kinds of things, of which brigand-hunting is not the least?"

"Very true."

"I am tired, wearied, worn out, and want a rest."

"Take one by all means."

"How can I? It's killing your wife, and me, too. Now, when we thought the campaign was over, what happens?"

"Tell me."

"You throw a dangerous maniac at us—a mad poisoner."

"I had nothing to do with it."

"As leader of this expedition you are responsible. I hold you so."

"That's rather hard on me," replied Jack with a smile.

"Not at all. You should have got away before the lunatic was sprung on us."

"That is what I intended to do, but this sudden indisposition of Emily——"

"All your own fault ; serves you right ; but I do not deserve illness, and if I am to stave off an attack I must have a change."

"I am agreeable," said Jack.

"How I shall get to sleep to-night, I don't know," continued Mr. Mole.

"What's up now?"

"Thinking of that madman at large, of course."

"Don't fret about him. Very likely Arentino has him in prison by this time."

"Not he," said the professor, sceptically.

"It will not be long first; morning will see him a captive in his dungeon cell."

"You are very sanguine, but what would you do if he was lurking in this house, knife in hand, to stab, cut, slay us all when we are wrapped in sleep?"

The picture that Mole graphically drew made Jack's flesh creep a little.

He felt that such a thing might happen.

"As a rule," the professor went on, "you find me an optimist—that is, I look at the bright side of things."

"I am obliged, on reflection, to confess that you have some right on this occasion to be a pessimist," replied Jack.

"Of course I have. Examine the house; look under every bed; lock up every door and window."

"Good advice."

"Let Monday patrol the passages and the stairs. If some precautions are not taken we shall all be murdered. Yes, sir, our throats will be cut as we slumber."

"I sha'n't sleep a wink now you have started that idea."

"Don't you thank me for it?"

"Certainly I do," rejoined Jack, "but there are some debts of gratitude we would rather not incur."

"Acknowledge that I am the salvation of all in the house."

"Let the matter drop. We do not know that there is any stranger here yet. I will see that precautions are taken."

"Neglect it at your peril!"

"It is strange," added Jack, "that Emily should be afraid of something happening to-night."

"Indeed! How is that?" Mole enquired.

"She told me she had dreamed that young Jack was bleeding to death from a wound in the breast."

"That is very remarkable. Does she know about the attempted poisoning?"

"Not a word."

"Or that Barboni has a mad brother at large, who has sworn to exterminate us?"

"That has been sedulously kept a secret from her. I myself cautioned young Jack to say nothing about him."

"Is the boy with his mother?" Mole asked.

"Yes. She insisted that he should sleep with her to-night, so I took him out of his own little room and brought him to her."

"Her instinct tells her that danger threatens. Maternal sagacity is at work. Very curious," exclaimed the professor, meditatively. "Is there anyone else in the room?"

"Not at present. I have had a square bed placed there for my use, and when we say 'Good-night,' presently, I shall be close to them," replied Jack.

"Where is that essence of lampblack, Monday?"

"He sleeps on this floor, at the end of the passage. The least call would rouse him."

At that moment a dark figure appeared in the doorway.

It was Monday himself.

In one hand he held a pistol, in the other a knife.

He opened his mouth with a smile, showing his white gleaming teeth.

"No occasion for to call um, sare," he exclaimed.

"What keeps you up?" asked Jack.

"'Fraid that old arsenic baker come back and try to carve some of us, so um walk about, looking heah, there, and every where; up in um attic, and down in um wood and wine cellar."

"Have you seen any thing of a suspicious nature?"

"Ain't seen nuffin for certain, Mast' Jack, but I could swear heard um footstep on the stair."

"Did you follow it up?"

"This chile been all over um house; p'r'aps it's one of um ghosts in this jolly old house; quite a nice home for um spirits," replied Monday.

The professor made a gesture indicative of disgust.

"Nonsense, my good fellow," he said; "please don't talk such rot. If you heard any thing on the stairs it was human."

"That's what um think umself."

"It follows then, that there is a strange man in the house. No doubt it is Guiseppe Barboni."

"The question is," added Monday, "where um hiding?"

"Have you got a light?"

"What you take me for?" asked Monday. "How I go 'bout the house in the dark? Got um slap-up lantern. Leab him outside this room for um moment."

"That's just it," said the professor.

"How um mean, sare?"

"That's how you missed the man. You go flashing your bull's-eye all over the place. The man sees it, knows what your little game is and hides."

"What you giving me? Go on," replied Monday; "my head's level enough."

"Another thing I notice," went on the professor, "you have got your thick clumsy boots on."

"S'pose want to go out and run in street?"

"They can be heard all over the house. You give warning of your approach."

"What um want to do?"

"Take off your boots, leave your lantern, prowl about in the dark, and you'll soon hear something of your man, if, as we imagine, he is lurking in the house."

"That is not bad advice; act on it for an experiment," said Jack.

"All right, sare If I want you I will call," rejoined Monday

"And I will come to your side as quickly as possible. Harvey has gone to bed, I believe."

"All gone 'cept we three. It am past um midnight hour. Hush! um going after um bogey man."

Grasping his weapon firmer, Monday indulged in a smile and disappeared.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

A NIGHT OF HORROR—AFTER MONDAY'S DEPARTURE ALL WAS SILENT AS THE VOICELESS TOMB ITSELF.

MR. MOLE and Jack contented themselves with looking at one another.

Occasionally they glanced towards the door.

Both listened intently for the slightest sound.

Their patience, however, was not rewarded by any noise or by a signal from Monday.

The professor drank off a glass of Italian wine and broke the silence.

It was as well that he did so.

Each one felt that it was becoming awfully oppressive.

"That fellow Monday is brave enough," remarked Mole, "but he wants a lot of teaching."

"Excuse me," Jack replied, "I fancy he knows more about tracking an enemy than you will ever teach him."

"Not a bit of it. I'll back myself to find Barboni's brother if he is in the house."

"How will you do it?"

"Wait and see. I have a species of magnetism about me. I will concentrate my mind on him, and make him come straight into this room."

"That's all bosh! I won't believe it. The wine is talking, not you," answered Jack.

"Don't insult your old tutor, the one to whom you owe every thing, because he wants to put you up to a new wrinkle."

"If you can bring Guiseppe Barboni into this room, I will apologise and take a back seat."

"So you ought to. He's bound to come, I tell you, my dear fellow, directly I turn on the current of my animal magnetism, odic force, occult influence, or whatever you like to call it."

"Supposing he cannot resist you, what will you do with him?"

"Nothing; I shall remain passive; it will be for you and Monday to secure the fiend."

"Then you will wait for Monday to return before you begin your operations?"

"Precisely so. I should like to have two of you here. I'm getting an old man, and you rather overrate your strength, you know, Harkaway."

"Do I?" said Jack. "That is where you make a decided mistake. You would soon see me floor the madman if he came within reach. I'd knock him out in once."

Not being at all sleepy, Jack hoped to derive some amusement from this latest idea of Mr. Mole's.

What had induced him to think that he was a mesmerist it was impossible to tell.

He had all kinds of strange fancies at times, when the wine got into his head.

Only the other day he declared that he had been dining with the King of Italy.

The time passed slowly; nothing was heard of Monday.

I was talking about change just now," exclaimed the professor; "I will make a suggestion."

"If it is any thing I can fall in with, rely upon it, I will do so," answered Jack.

"We haven't seen much since we have been here; let us visit Pompeii to-morrow. It will be a real treat to men of a classical education like ourselves."

"Capital. We will go."

"You and I—no crowd. We might take your pet nigger if Guiseppe does not settle him to-night, but nobody else. I want to enjoy myself without a crush. The train takes one from her to Pompeii in half-an-hour."

They lapsed into silence, thinking of the city of Pompeii, which had been buried by the lava and scoriæ of Mount Vesuvius for so many centuries, and only lately dug out for the benefit of the end-of-the-century antiquaries and tourists.

All at once a stifled shriek in a woman's voice was heard.

The house consisted of three stories, and it came from the upper floor.

Here slept the servants, who were three in number—the housemaid, the nurse who attended on young Jack Harkaway, and the cook.

It seemed as if the cry emanated from one of these.

For a moment all was still again.

Then there was a scuffling of feet, as if some one was coming down from the upper floor to the second.

"Did you hear that?" asked Mole.

"It was a subdued cry, but I heard it," replied Jack. "Will you stay here while I go upstairs? It may have roused Emily, though I gave her a sleeping draught."

"I think it came from the servants' quarters. Where is Monday?"

Just then the voice of the black was heard.

It came from the second landing.

"Mast' Jack," said Monday.

"Yes; I hear," was Harkaway's reply.

"Um want you, sare. Quick! Come!"

"All right. I will be with you."

Mr. Mole rose at the same time that Harkaway did.

"Hadn't I better come with you?" he exclaimed. "The ripe wisdom of mature years may be of service to you in this hour of trial.

"Stay where you are and guard this floor," answered Jack.

"Bah! What is there to guard? Only a couple of empty bottles. I will accompany you."

"Stay here," cried Jack; "I don't want you. Mesmerise Guiseppe downstairs, and kill or capture him."

Mr. Mole sank back into a chair, shivering.

"Not for worlds," he answered. "I have been reading

up mesmerism lately, it is true, but I would not like to practise it on Guiseppe Barboni to-night, while I am alone. The man might come when I call him, you know."

"You old humbug!" said Jack, as he snatched up a candle and went upstairs to join Monday.

He found him outside the room occupied by Harvey and his wife, Hilda, which was at the end of the passage.

Close by were two women crouching in the corner in their night-dresses.

These were the cook and housemaid, who had rushed from the room in which they slept when they heard the shriek.

They seemed to be overcome with terror.

All they could do was to clasp their arms round one another, cross their foreheads, and call on the Holy Virgin for protection and pity.

"Where's the nurse?" demanded Jack.

"Don't know sare," replied Monday. "I was listening outside Missy Emily's room to guard her and young Mast' Jack, so's no harm should come to them, when I heard the cry, and the women ran down.

"The madman has been at his foul work."

"That's what I'se berry much afraid ob, sare."

"Stay here while I go upstairs. It won't do to leave this passage unguarded, and I don't want to disturb either my wife and child, or Hilda and Harvey, if I can help it."

"You go alone, sare?"

"Yes," replied Harkaway; "I have arms. Don't alarm yourself about me."

He spoke to the two servants in Italian, but they made him no answer.

It appeared as if they were beside themselves with fear.

In fact, after he went away they both fainted, lying on the polished oak floor like two statues cut out of stone.

Jack ascended the stairs, with the light in one hand and a pistol in the other.

He proceeded very cautiously.

Nothing, however, confronted or encountered him.

Had it not been for the scream they had heard, he would have thought it was a false alarm.

He was quickly undeceived, however, in this particular.

Facing him, as he reached the top of the stairs, was the apartment in which the nurse slept.

Under ordinary circumstances, young Jack would have occupied a cot by her side.

Owing to an extraordinary feeling of nervousness which had come over Emily, the boy had been removed.

It proved lucky, indeed, that it was so.

When Harkaway entered the room, which was of small size, he started back at what he saw.

A thrill of horror ran through him.

The nurse, who was a young and not bad-looking woman, was lying on the floor and covered with blood.

She had been attacked in her sleep, dragged from her bed, and had her throat dreadfully gashed with a knife.

A moment's examination showed that she was quite dead.

That this was the work of Guiseppe Barboni, Jack could not doubt for a moment.

By some means he had concealed himself in the house to do his fell work.

In a warm climate it is not difficult to enter any dwelling, as the doors and windows must be left open in the evening.

Were it not so, everyone would suffer from the extreme heat.

The house would be uninhabitable.

It seemed clear that the madman had crept up to the top of the house.

There he concealed himself, and heard young Jack talking to his nurse; not remarking that the boy had been removed he waited until all was still.

Then he crept into the room, intending to kill him.

This would strike a heavy blow at Harkaway's heart.

Possibly the nurse was aroused; she cried out, and to prevent a general alarm being given, the madman slew her.

Where was he now?

That was the question Jack asked himself as he looked anxiously round the room.

He noticed some curtains hanging round the window move.

At first he thought it was the wind

A moment's reflection convinced him that it was a still night when scarcely a breath of air crept over the surface of the bay.

Advancing a few steps, he was sure that he distinguished a human form shrouded by the curtains.

Raising his pistol, he fired at the drapery to either kill or bring forth the skulking miscreant.

He produced the latter effect.

The next moment the curtains were thrown on one side.

Guiseppe Barboni, with a blood-stained knife in his hand, stepped forth.

Jack was face to face with the madman.

"Ha, ha!" cried the latter, "now we meet again. Will you hang me as you did my brother? I wanted to kill your boy, then your wife, then your friends, and you last; but I can wait, there is plenty of time. You have a pistol; I am too poor to buy one as yet. To-night I give in; we shall meet again."

All the while he was talking, Guiseppe Barboni moved about the room.

First he was on one side, then on the other.

Jack tried to cover him with his revolver, but was unable to do so.

Surely it would be no crime to kill such a wretch.

He fired twice at him.

The bullets did not go near him, such extraordinary antics did he make.

With a yell of derision, that was heard all over the house, Guiseppe darted out of the door.

Monday was heard to utter an exclamation, and a cry arose from Mr. Mole.

These sounds were followed by the opening and shutting of the front door.

This indicated that the madman had escaped.

Jack hastily descended to the second floor, where he found Hilda and Harvey greatly alarmed.

They had been roused from their beds by the noise of the pistol shots.

Emily, however, weak, exhausted, and in a sound slumber from the effects of the sleeping potion, did not awake.

The madman had darted past Monday and Mole, both of whom were unharmed.

"In heaven's name," said Harvey, "what does all this mean?"

Jack explained briefly what had happened within the last hour, and quieting Hilda's fears, he asked Dick Harvey to come downstairs with him.

"Just be good enough to comfort the servants," said Jack.

"I will take them into my room," Hilda replied.

"Yes; they cannot go upstairs; that horror will drive them mad."

"Do you think we are rid of the lunatic?"

"I heard the front door bang."

"That may be a ruse to deceive us; do be careful. How thankful I am that Emily and the boy are asleep."

"So am I," said Jack. "It might have been the death of her in the state she is in."

Monday was standing by.

He looked very much annoyed.

"Don't know how you come to miss him, Mast' Jack," he remarked. "You fire twice."

"The fellow dodged about like a will-o'-the-wisp," answered Harkaway.

"Um pass me like um flash."

"We shall hear more of him, though not to-night, I hope."

"How de debbel um come in?" asked Monday.

"Same way he got out, I suppose. The front door was open all the evening, as it generally is."

Jack, Harvey, and Monday now went down to the *entre-sol*.

They found Mr. Mole lying on a sofa; his coat was torn, his collar pulled off his neck, and he appeared to have had a tremendous struggle with somebody.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked Jack. "Did you encounter the ruffian?"

The professor raised himself and sat up, as if with difficulty.

"Am I wounded?" he queried.

"Not that I can see."

"A narrow escape. I have been struck in more than one place by the maniac's fist."

"He had a knife."

"I took it from him," replied Mr. Mole. "I wrested it from his felonious fist; here it is."

He put his hand under the sofa and drew forth a blood-stained knife.

It was the same with which Guiseppe Barboni had murdered the nurse.

But Mr. Mole had not won it from him.

In his frantic hurry to open the door and escape, the madman had dropped his knife.

Mole had been watching his exit, and was artful enough to pick it up.

"Why did you not secure the villain?" asked Jack.

"He had the strength of ten men; the demented always have. In vain I wrestled with him—he threw me—he tore my clothes. Look! behold me!"

In reality, Mr. Mole had not met the madman at all. He heard the knife fall, and the door shut, after the shots had been fired.

Picking up the knife, he tore his clothes himself to make all believe that he had been fighting with the lunatic.

"You said you would mesmerise him and make him come to you, sir," remarked Jack.

"So he did. He came straight into the room when I was thinking of him, and I kicked him out. It is a wonder I was not killed; but you have not told me what mischief the wild beast has done."

"Fortunately we have escaped; he intended to kill young Jack. Not finding him, as he was with his mother, the nurse was the victim, poor creature."

"Is she dead?"

"Yes. It has been a night of horror," replied Jack. "I shall sleep in a chair; it is useless to take one's clothes off."

"I will keep you company," said Harvey.

"Me watch," exclaimed Monday.

Mr. Mole yawned and stretched himself again on the sofa.

"My sable friend," he said, "I thank you. Sleep is what I yearn for; be watchful. Good-night."

"Mast' Mole, um gettin' old," muttered Monday. "Got to make allowance."

The black went all over the house.

He was extremely vigilant.

Harvey threw himself down on the carpet in the smoking-room, dressed, ready to be roused at a moment's notice.

"Be careful," said Jack; "I look to you, Dick. Mole is no good."

"My dear fellow, I will not close my eyes. I am only resting a bit," replied Harvey.

"Monday cannot do every thing, and the madman is awfully cunning."

"He would not be a Barboni if he were not."

"The lives of my wife and child are in your hands."

Harvey looked up in surprise.

"Where are you going, old son? Aren't you about to help me keep the fort?"

"How can I?" answered Jack. "A murder has been committed in the house; the madman may come back at any time. It is my imperative duty to go to the police office."

"Of course, I forgot that. Forgive me for being so stupid," said Harvey.

Jack put on his hat and left the house.

It was on the tip of his tongue for Harvey to call back and ask if he should not accompany him.

The madman might be in the street.

Harkaway was entirely alone.

But when Harvey heard Mole snoring, and recognised the fact that the women had only himself and Monday to protect them, he said nothing.

It was necessary for some one to guard the house, and the precious lives in it.

Consequently he remained silent.

But it was impossible for him to get any sleep.

He started at the slightest sound.

Jack was in the street, the madman was still at large, and he could not help fearing that he would run into danger.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

IN THE STREET—THE BURNT RAG, OR THE HAUNT OF THE LAZZARONI.

ONE side of the Strada was lighted by the stars, but the other along which Harkaway proceeded was plunged in almost total darkness.

He could just see his way, and that was all.

Although much concerned and alarmed at what had occurred in the house, he walked carelessly along.

It was his belief that no present danger was to be apprehended.

His heart was full of gratitude for the preservation of young Jack.

Had he been snatched from them they would have received a blow from which it would have been long before they recovered.

When he had gone about a hundred and fifty yards, he fancied he heard a footstep.

This was accompanied by heavy breathing,
He turned sharply round to see what it might be.
This movement was only just in time to enable him to
avoid a blow from a stiletto.

Someone had been following him from the house with cat-like tread.

He felt in his pocket for his revolver.

To his horror he found that in the excitement of the moment he had left it at home.

This placed him completely in the power of the would-be assassin.

Again the dagger was raised to strike.

He beheld two eyes glaring at him like burning coals, and imagined that he also recognised the dark outline of Giuseppe Barboni's features.

A feeling of terrible depression came over him.

As if fascinated, he stood rooted to the spot.

He was for the time incapable of speech or action.

The shadow of coming death had fallen upon him.

It is thus at some critical periods of existence with the bravest of men.

Suddenly a second man crossed the street as fast as he could.

The spell was broken.

Jack knocked up the maniac's arm and shouted for help.

By a miracle, he was saved.

The villain took to his heels, turned down a side street, and was lost to sight.

The next moment, Jack was gently taken by the arm, and conducted across the street into the starlight.

He saw that his deliverer, at the eleventh hour, was Aventino.

"Is it you, signor?" asked the detective. "My arrival was lucky. I was coming to your house, saw the gleam of the knife, and—you know the rest."

"Thank you, a thousand times," replied Jack.

"I feared the madman would attack you."

"Why so?"

"The police have searched every low and common lodging house in the town, where the lazzaroni (thieves and beggars), congregate at night, without finding any trace of the brigand's brother."

"But the baker, Adriano?"

"They have seen nothing of him."

"Then," said Jack, "when he escaped by the back, he must have entered the house from the front."

"Has he been there?"

"Wait and hear. He has been concealed all the time within the house, until a few minutes ago, when he again escaped, after committing an awful crime."

"Heavenly saints! What is that?" asked Aventino.

"He went into the nurse's room to kill my child. The boy was fortunately with his mother."

"Ha! he missed his stroke."

"Not altogether," answered Jack, "he stabbed the woman to the heart."

"Santa Maria! that is dreadful," exclaimed the detective; "but we will have him before the night is out."

"Do not be too sure of that."

"Basto! I will wager a year's pay on it."

"He is as cunning as a fox, and slippery as an eel."

"Most lunatics are, but I have information."

"Of what nature?" inquired Jack, who was still inclined to be sceptical as to the chances of catching Guiseppe Barboni.

"Listen, signor," continued Aventino: "the lazzaroni have their haunts in this Naples of ours."

"That is the case in all large cities, with the criminals and mendicants."

"They are known to the police. Did you not see the scoundrel dart down that side street on your right?"

"Yes, he seemed to know where he was going."

"Certainly; he has not forgotten the plan of the city, or the names of the streets, though he has been imprisoned so long. Well, in that street, which is called the Strada del Popolo, is a well-known refuge for the lazzaroni, which has gained the title of the 'Burnt Rag.'"

"A strange designation."

"It is very simple," replied Aventino. "The keeper or landlord, is one Buffo, who also maintains a second-hand—I ought to say a tenth-rate old clothes' shop. If a beggar or thief makes a little money he goes to Buffo, buys a fresh suit, and burns his rags."

Jack could not help smiling at this explanation.

"What makes you think that he is in hiding at Buffo's?" he queried.

"Buffo attends at the prison gates every morning," was the reply.

"For what reason?"

"He goes at the hour prisoners are liberated and gives each one his card, on which is written the address of the 'Burnt Rag,' and his scale of charges for board and lodging. Also he states that he gives a week's credit to enable them to make something."

"Still I am in the dark," said Jack.

"I was at the prison gate this morning, and I saw Buffo present a card to Guiseppe."

"Ah! that is better."

"He will not attempt any thing more to-night. He has failed in his attack on your son, and in the later one on you. He is tired, and wants refreshment and rest. Where can he get it at this late hour, except at the renowned Buffo's?"

"That is well reasoned," replied Jack.

They walked a little way down the Strada del Popolo.

Before them on the left-hand side, was a house with a red lamp over the door.

Aventino pointed to it with his finger.

"That's Buffo's," he continued.

"What will you do now?" asked Jack.

"Get reinforcements from the police station and make a raid on it. They are desperate, some of the fellows, and stick together. That will take me half an hour."

"In that time," suggested Jack, "he may have refreshed himself and taken it into his head to go and sleep on the beach or in some dry corner."

"That is so," admitted Aventino, thoughtfully. "Will you stay here, signor, and watch while I go for a police platoon?"

"With pleasure," Jack replied.

"You will run no risk. Keep in the shadow of a doorway."

"All right, I will watch, and if he should go out——"

"Follow him—and yet, that might be dangerous," said the detective, hesitatingly. "No, on second thoughts, wait here till we come."

"Agreed. I shall await you."

Saying this, Jack took up his position in a doorway, and Aventino hastened to the bureau of police.

So far, all was well.

It would have remained so, had it not been for Harkaway's impatient and adventurous disposition.

No sooner was he left alone, than he was seized with a desire to go to the door of the lazzaroni's haunt, and listen.

He had heard that these gentry hold high carnival at night.

Perhaps a window would be open, and he could hear their songs or ribald conversations.

It would be something to tell Harvey and Mr. Mole.

Accordingly, instead of staying where Aventino had placed and directed him to remain, he went to the door with the red light.

As he had expected, a side window was open, owing to the heat.

A blind of the same colour as the lamp, fluttered in the slight breeze that came up from the sea.

Occasionally he could get a glimpse of those inside, and could hear what went on.

This is what he saw.

Half-a-dozen men were seated round a deal table, with wine bottles and glasses before them.

All were smoking cigarettes or cigars.

Presumably, the other inmates of the establishment had gone to bed.

Two lamps, with reflectors, flashed their light from each side of the room.

A little man, with a comical face, was standing on the table, singing a funny song.

It was about the Pope and the Sultan.

The Pope, so went the ditty, led a merry life, knowing nothing of wedded strife, but he was allowed to drink his wine. The Sultan, on the other hand, was forbidden the pleasure of the wine cup, but could indulge in matrimony to any extent.

The refrain was to the effect that—

“When my wife caresses me,
I fancy I the Sultan be.
And when the ruby wine I tope,
I fancy that I am the Pope!”

This effort was received with great applause.

When the singer finished he jumped from the table, and whispered something in the ear of one who appeared to be the president.

It was, in fact, the illustrious Buffo himself.

He, in his turn, spoke to a man sitting by his side, whom Jack, as he turned his head, saw was no other than Guiseppe Barboni.

Aventino was right in his conjecture.

The madman had sought refuge in the "Burnt Rag," and was the guest of the lazzaroni.

A vile, dirty, truculent crowd they seemed.

As one or two faces were turned towards the window, Jack Harkaway retreated a couple of paces.

He looked up the street for Aventino and his fellow-officers.

But it was not time for them to appear yet.

In a moment, the door opened.

Two men glided out noiselessly, and a third followed.

He was grasped from behind.

Before he had time to cry out for assistance, a cloth was put over his mouth.

Without any delay, he was dragged inside the house, the door was shut, a rope was passed round his arms, and he was led to the lower end of the table.

The cloth was then removed from his face, and he recognised the fact that he was the captive of the lazzaroni.

All had passed so quickly, that it was like a dream.

He had no doubt the singer, from his elevated position, had seen him looking in at the window.

This fact he communicated to the manager, who in turn had planned and carried out the capture.

Guiseppe Barboni brandished his knife. "It is my enemy!" he cried, "the one who hounded my brother, the brigand, to his death. I demand his life."

Jack felt himself in a very uncomfortable position.

He wished to goodness, now it was too late, that he had not been so venturesome.

Always was he getting into trouble, because he, like our heroic Nelson of old, knew not fear.

Would Aventino and the force never come?

They were his only hope in this embarrassing emergency.

Buffo rose in his place, and waved his hand with the bland air of a born patrician.

"Not so fast, *amico mio*," he said, "you are a stranger amongst us, as is the signor."

"I say he is a vile Englishman," cried Guiseppe.

He was beside himself with rage.

"Silence, if you please," continued the speaker. "I am Buffo, well known as the proprietor of this symposium."

"What do I care for you?"

"As much as I do for you, my friend."

"His life is forfeited. I will have it."

"Be quiet, or I will either turn you out, or put you in the cellar."

"You dare not do it."

"Per Baccho! I always keep order in my house."

"Let me kill him! Oh, heaven! am I to be always baffled?"

"Your quarrel is none of mine," added Buffo. "I want to keep on good terms with the police. The signor was seen spying by the gentleman who was obliging with a song. We thought that he should be made to pay his footing, so we brought him inside."

"Death! death!" shouted Guiseppe Barboni.

So violent was he, that two men had to restrain him.

Had he not been held tightly, he would have flown at Harkaway.

Then the earthly career of the latter would soon have been over.

"Really you are very impolite, and talk about an extremely unpleasant subject," said Buffo.

"I am in my right."

"Order! If the signor will give us what money he has about him, as well as his watch and rings, and pledge his word of honour that he will not mention this little adventure to our natural enemies, the police, he shall be at liberty to depart."

Jack looked defiantly at the speaker.

"Not a lire will you get from me," he replied.

"Then we shall be under the painful necessity of helping ourselves."

"Try it on; you will repent it."

The lazzaroni laughed at this threat.

He was in the thieves' den, and was at their mercy, for they had bound his arms.

Buffo advanced towards him, and was about to put his hand in his pockets, when the madman broke loose.

He pushed aside those who were restraining him.

Foaming at the mouth, knife in hand, he rushed at Harkaway.

The latter saw him coming.

To avoid the blow aimed at him, he stepped on one side.

Buffo was in the act of extracting his watch, a handsome, valuable, gold English lever, from his waistcoat.

Intent upon the spoliation, he did not see Guiseppe, nor hear the warning cries of his lodgers.

The consequence was that he received the knife of the madman full in his chest.

With a dreadful cry, and an agonised expression, he fell back.

Yells of execration filled the room, but no one dared to interfere with the madman.

Jack Harkaway ran towards the door.

Guiseppe Barboni followed him, shrieking out the most horrible curses.

The din and uproar was fearful.

Men who had been in bed, appeared on the stairs in their under garments only.

At this critical juncture, footsteps and voices were heard outside.

The door was burst violently open.

Aventino, at the head of twelve men, made his appearance.

They were fully armed.

"Fire!" exclaimed Aventino.

There was no time for hesitation, for the madman had seized Jack by the throat.

The fateful knife was in the act of descending, when a volley of bullets caused him to release his hold, and fall on the floor, a corpse.

Guiseppe Barboni had soon followed Buffo and the nurse to the land of spirits.

Every one in the house was arrested, and the premises put under a guard.

Aventino cut the cord which bound Jack's arms, and walked with him to the Strada di Toledo.

They had quitted Barboni's brother for ever.

At the same time, Harkaway had experienced one of the narrowest escapes he had ever had in his life.

When he reached home, and told his story, he was heartily congratulated by his friends.

Monday, faithful fellow, almost cried over his beloved master.

Mr. Mole and Harvey celebrated the occasion with champagne.

Jack gave Aventino a handsome reward, which he greatly deserved, and when the dawn was breaking they retired, feeling that they could rest in peace, and that the shadow which had hung over them was, at last, removed.

* * * * *

A week passed rapidly away. Emily was on the high road to recovery and ready to travel.

Jack had made all necessary arrangements to go by sea to Marseilles; from where they would take the *train de luxe* from the Riviera to Calais.

Emily was seated in front of her bedroom window, gazing out on the ever beautiful bay—her heart full of gratitude to Providence for the restoration of her boy, the flight of Hunston, the death of the two Barbonis, and the narrow escape of all from being poisoned—when Jack, with his usual impetuosity, burst into the room, exclaiming—

“We sail for England to-morrow, darling.”

“To-morrow?” she said, joyfully.

“Yes. I shall take passage presently in the first steamer of the *Messageries Imperiales* line.”

“Who goes with us?”

“Harvey and Hilda, Mr. Mole as the youngster’s tutor and Monday.”

“What of our American friend?”

“Oh, he goes on to Rome. He has not yet done what he calls his European tour,” said Jack.

“And Mr. Campbell?”

“He marries Lily Cockles to-morrow before we start, and they are going to Switzerland.”

“So we separate, after all the exciting events we have gone through,” said Emily.

“Certainly,” replied Jack; “and now we’ll have a bottle of wine. I’ve licked the brigand, and I’m as jolly as a sand-boy.”

* * * * *

All was over.

The Englishmen had kept their oath, and hunted down Barboni and his formidable band.

So Jack Harkaway went back to England with his wife and child.

Mr. Mole was young Jack’s tutor.

The long absence of Harkaway had compelled the Horse Guards to supersede him.

Not caring for this, he took up his residence with Harvey, and devoted himself for the ensuing winter to a country gentleman's life.

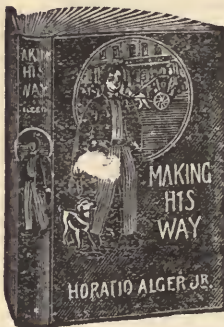
But this was not to last long.

Stirring events were before him.

Hunston still lived.

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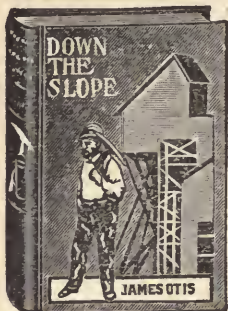
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